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ABSTRACT

Two experiments were undertaken in Hong Kong to examine sociocultural factors in the speech acts of making apologies in Cantonese. The first experiment involved ten men who were given role cards describing various situations with minor to serious problems for which they must apologize. The influence of certain situational variables on the expressions used was examined. In the second experiment, both male and female individuals elicited apologies in department stores by intentionally bumping others. The kinds of apologies used in the situations were recorded. A series of assumptions about the usual forms and patterns of apologetic utterances and more significant contextual variables, including role identities, sex, age, and socioeconomic background of the interlocutors, were generally confirmed. (MSE)

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MAKING APOLOGIES IN CANTONESE

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Abstract

Although the Cantonese Dialect is spoken by over 90% of the people of Hong Kong and is taught extensively to expatriates, there appears to be a lack of systematic studies with regard to speech acts for making apologies. Whereas the native speakers learn this quite intuitively, expatriate learners appear to be often perplexed by when and how to make the correct type of apology markers. The examination takes into consideration the cultural background of Hong Kong people, and through the conducting of two controlled experiments, reflects what are the main socioeconomic factors influencing the form of apology and what are the possible linguistic patterns that can be manipulated to achieve certain speech intentions. The discussion and analysis will, to a certain extent, indicate what Coulmas says of "a structure in speech beyond the internal structure of decontextualized sentences" (1981:1).

Table of Contents

Page

Chapter I

Introduction: Rationale and Objectives. 1

Chapter II

The Sociolinguistic concept of apology in Hong Kong. 5

Chapter III

An Exploration of the use of apology markers. 10

Chapter IV

The Experiments. 32

Chapter V

Summary and Concluding Remarks. 46

Bibliographical Reference.

List of Appendixes

		Page
Appendix I :	Fraser's classification of strategies for apology-making.	A1
Appendix II :	Apologies: Full data and transcriptions from recordings made.	A2 -A16

Chapter I

Introduction

Rationale and Objectives

The interactional basis of the things people say and do in the settings of everyday interaction is generally taken for granted and rarely given vigorous sociological formulation. Making apologies is considered a social etiquette which is as important as expressing thanks or any other social behaviour under what Searle would call acts of expressives. Ervin Tripp has made invaluable contributions in the analysis of interactional human behaviour and recent researches in discourse analysis, ethnography, pragmatics, and ethnomethodology have all presented detailed observations of the methodic practices involved in interacting conversationalists. There have been interesting studies made regarding conversational routines and on apologizing specifically between English native speakers, but as yet there is little done in the area of Chinese on the same topics.

It would have been a very interesting study if all the Chinese expressives for polite exchanges are examined, or that cultural differences affecting the discrepancy in linguistic and non-linguistic forms of polite exchanges could be identified, but considering the time constraint for this research, I have chosen to restrict my discussion and analysis on one aspect of the wide spectrum of social etiquettes, and that is on apologizing. I consider acts of apology to have wider social implications because they involve offences, wrongs, hurts and injuries. An apology is generally considered a repair strategy or a remedial act in the course of social interaction. If

one were to thank someone for a gift or service, whatever form used, though linguistically inaccurate, would probably be recognised and accepted. But with apologies, the strategies involved may have wider implications and effects on the part of the hearer or of the communicators' relationship.

Goffman discusses how participants in a social encounter exploit various strategies to announce their social identities in terms of establishing a particular face (1955). This image or 'face' to be projected in turn is dependent on a number of variables which many linguists have referred to as contexts. The context plus the performative utterance gives the real meaning to any expression in any single situation: "We must consider the total situation in which the utterance is issued - the total speech-act - if we are to see the parallel between statements and performative utterances and how each can go wrong". (Austin, 1955). My paper on apologizing will be an attempt to look at some of the ways people in Hong Kong apologize in different situations, to different people. Hong Kong has been, linguistically, a potpourri of Asian and Western flavours. As a British Colony for more than a century, occidental influence is strong and English has always been regarded as the superimposed norm in the Fergusonian sense. English is the language of wider communication used for official and international dealings. Respect for and mastery of this language was particularly strong in the sixties and early seventies. Statistically more people are familiar with English as a second language now, but educationalists have greatly criticized the decline of standards acquired. In other words, more people seem to be able to use English, but not in its 'standardized' form. Chinese on the other hand in Hong Kong means very much Cantonese, the day-to-day language understood and practised by almost all the

local Chinese population. Cantonese is the vernacular that expatriates and non-Chinese have to acquire if they want to understand the local people more or get more involved in their culture. Cantonese is the language for intra as well as inter-ethnic group communication, and despite the use of a different system for writing (i.e. the modern standard Chinese or 'bai hua' learnt at schools), there is every sign that Cantonese has crept into the media by way of television and newspapers. Not to discuss further the complex language problem of Hong Kong here, I wish to draw attention to the four specific apology markers selected for this study. They are "deui-m̀h-jyuh", "m̀h-hōu-yi-si", "m̀h gōi" and the adopted form of the English "sorry".

For making apologies alone, there are at least seven explicit Cantonese apology markers[1], not to mention other possible ways of apologizing not using markers but including body gestures and paralinguistic acts. In discourse, apologies can be used strategically as a remedial process, or a disarming move, or a ritual filling exchange as in closing remarks in conversation or discourse. Apologies are applied on account of either of the following situations:

- arising from some physical injury done e.g. toe-stepping.
- on account of personal injury e.g. insult.
- having caused inconvenience to people e.g. intrusions and delays.
- when one is breaking certain social norms e.g. saying the wrong things at the wrong time to the wrong persons.
- cases of misunderstanding. e.g. mistaking the identity of the person you are speaking to.

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1 m̀h-gòi 唔該 sāt-lāih 失禮
doih-maahn 待慢 chéng leuhng 請諒
deui-m̀h-jyuh 對唔住 m̀h-hóu-yi-si 唔好意思
póuh-hip 抱歉

But for whatever purpose the apology is directed to, speaker of the apology must be aware of the forces at work which are the variables that affect the form of expression used and the illocutionary force applied or felt in the act.

To allow for reasonable discussions on the more explicit forms of apologies within reasonable limits, I shall only focus on four apology markers most commonly used in Hong Kong (with particular emphasis on "deui-m̀h-jyuh"), examine their communicative functions and operational significance, and any syntactic points of interest or interrelationship in contexts.

To conclude, two sets of controlled experiments for testing out certain assumptions made regarding the apology markers and the effects of contextualization would be described in the last chapter.

It is hoped that this study could lead to further studies in the same area or on other speech acts based on the Hong Kong scene. It is also hoped that non-natives who are interested in understanding the language and social norms of the Chinese people would find the discussions useful.

Chapter II

The Sociolinguistic Concept of Apology in Hong Kong

'Apologizing' is an expressive illocutionary act, and the competence in performance of this act is of utmost importance in the establishment of one's public image and in the realization of interpersonal relationship. As Austin claimed (1962), there are rules to be observed or conditions to be satisfied in order to make the performative explicit and effective. The success of any speech act, therefore, reflects the speaker's ability to use the appropriate sociocultural rules of speaking by reaching in a culturally acceptable way in context. Pragmatics deal with the rules for relating linguistic form to context stated as propositions, and meaning is built up through the circumstances or ' games' in which certain words are used. Hence I refer to Fraser's (1980) list of strategies for apology-making (Appendix I), his effort to identify and classify the various forms of expressives relating to apology-making in different situations under different circumstances and of different propositions.

To use Fraser's model would necessitate the elicitation of numerous apologetic expressions in Chinese, the size of which would make it impossible to deal with carefully within this research. To make the study more meaningful (and useful for those interested in the unique Hong Kong sociolinguistic set-up), I shall confine my discussion on the communicative functions of four most popular apology-markers used in Hong Kong and examine any strategic significance in the choice of expression. But first a few words on what should be considered an apology.

There are certain conditions that must be fulfilled before a remark or expression is considered an apology.

First, its occurrence involves a situation in which a wrong is done or about to be done. In other words, something complainable has happened or is about to be effected. An apology is not singly a speech act for making repairs or remedial action in which case the offender attempts to relieve himself of some of the moral responsibility and mitigate the circumstances by a verbal exchange. Edmonson (1980)[1] is of the view that complaints and apologies may co-occur as sequentially relevant communicative acts inside a segment of discourse. But the complaint in question does not necessarily be explicit, nor even be present. There are situations in which apologies may be exercised as a social manifestation of good behaviour. In the local Chinese community where the majority enjoys a family re-union in a restaurant in which no reservation system is practised often find themselves having to scramble for seats and table by various tactics; if they are polite, on facing competitors who may perhaps be ignorant of the 'siege', plentiful of "Excuse me, but the table has been taken" can be heard. This is what Barker (1975) would refer to as disarming moves in discourse. A disarmer is the result of using a particular anticipatory strategy, the strategy consists in anticipating a possible complaint on the part of a hearer.

Interestingly on the occasion of having to ask someone to pass you the sugar while lunching, the request is made by an initial marked apology which is in effect a polite request plus an implicit meaning of thank-you in advance.[2] Thus it seems apparent why Searle (1976) should classify apology as an Expressive together with other expressives such as 'thanks' ... etc. And, as Edmonson suggested (1980;275):

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1 Edmondson, W.J.: On Saying You're Sorry. In Conversational Routine, Coulmas F. (ed.) Mouton 1981.

2 In fact, the expressive 唔該 "m̀h gòi" is also used as a thank-you marker on other occasions. For details, refer to Page 30 of Chapter III.

> That a particular 'fixed expression' has an associated recongizable 'function' in discourse does not mean that the communicative or other act realizing that function has a predictable distribution, nor that any realization of that communicative 'function' will necessarily involve the use of the 'fixed expression', as opposed to the use of some other linguistic or paralinguistic token.

This brings about the second consideration for an act of apology - the pre-supposition of the speaker's sincerity and the belief in his acknowledgement of responsibility and state of regret by his mere stating them. An apology is an instance in which illocutionary force may be derived from locutionary force. However, the degree of acceptability of an apology depends on the force by which it is conveyed, the active role of speakers in the creation of meaning within different contexts (Strawson 1950) being most important in the successful performative of a communicative act. The following chapter will contain an examination into what speakers actually do with such illocutions in interactions terms here in Hong Kong.

A third criteria to what constitutes an apology is that it should be explicitly made, either by action or by words, and it must be appropriate to the situation or context. Referring again to Fraser's model, his first four strategies make use of overt apology markers such as "I hereby apologize for ..... must apologize for ..... please accept my apology for ....." in announcing, stating and requesting for acceptance of apologies. Linguistically an apology marker functions as a device to indicate that a statement is one of an apology. Should the speaker of Cantonese want to highlight or emphasize the state of regret or sincerity condition, he can do so by duplicating the marker either consecutively as in "m̀h-gòi m̀h-gòi" or allow repeititon of marker at beginning and end of the utterance. Intensifiers such as 真係 "jàn-haih" and 實在 "saht-joih" are also often used, together with the

relevant tone of voice. It is possible, however, for apologies to be conveyed in expressions sans apology markers. But what adds up linguistically has the meaning of apologizing and that the sincerity of the apology or depth of feeling or commiseration over the offence is not dependent on the apology markers as such but rather on the illocution intent and strategy so adopted.

The general rule of the game is whoever has committed the offence should first apologize. An informant, a yound lady who was bumped against by a gruffy man on the streets spontaneously bursted out: "Ouch, sorry". But what she got from the man was "Sò .. Sò .. Sò .. 乜鬼 rik" "Sò .. Sò .. Sò .. māt gwái rik" - equivalent to (What the hell are you sorry about). Circumstances do play tricks on people, and psychological condition such as nervousness, uptightness, confusion or deep embarrassment can affect one's spontaneous response and occasion sociolinguistic deviation.

Knowing the language itself is not enough, just like 'knowing the rules of tennis' is not enough. One must have the ability to play, to be able to visualise what a serve is, how to anticipate the drop of the ball, how to manoeuvre the opponent into a position using various tactics so as to win without breaking one's back. In discourse or speech events, there is a constant but subtle negotiation of power relationships between the participants. The competent person being the one whose ability to perform matches with his intentions.

A manager may tend to be apologetic when giving out urgent tasks to his subordinates. A subordinate, on the other hand, may also be over-apologetic being conscientious of his submissive role. Some speakers may even manipulate the various expressions to show hostility or ridicule, to make an offender who has not apologized sense his

inadequacy and poor social etiquette, very much like what Eric Berne would describe as the technique of "hooking the adult" in his exposition of Transactional Analysis (1964)[1].

One popular non-verbal way of saying sorry in Hong Kong is the salute hand gesture. The locals refer to this saluting as "sa¹lum" (pronounced as/sa¹lʌm/). The origin of this non-verbal way of apologizing is not clearly known, whether it's an extended gesture of the serviceman's practice, whether it's westernized gesture, or that it's simply Universal. One can see such gestures made most evidently by drivers who make sudden detours or switch lanes, a lorry driver backing his car toward approaching cars behind etc. whilst it can be understood that shouting verbal apologies across the lanes or highway is impossible, people at close proximity may also 'sa¹lum' in an act of apology. From real life experiences and media presentation, most of these 'sa¹lum' users here are male, either young in age or very much the non-sophisticates. This may be attributed again to the 'pop-culture' that is much influenced by the local Chinese television stations and radio programmes. This practice has noticeably caught on after the 1970s. When 'sa¹lum' is used para-linguistically (Abercrombie 1968) alongisde an apology marker or a 'guilty' smile, the smile must not be taken as impolite or jeering but instead, reflects a sense of sincerity on the part of the speaker and a sense of unpremeditation in committing the offence. It is also possibly used as a device to hide one's embarrassment, or a means to lighten up the atmosphere, or just a way to ward off possible protest.

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1 Eric Berne, the originator of transactional analysis, first recognized the value of viewing transactions between people in terms of whether their ego states at the time were based on their Child, Parent, or Adult programming. There are also various techniques which are Adult behaviour in themselves and can be used to Hook the Adult of others by using communication skill on others and to lead them to logical and meaningful negotiations. See also Eric Berne's "Games People Play" (1964).

Chapter III

An Exploration of the Use of Apology Markers

A sociolinguist is mainly concerned with the identification of behaviours characteristic of men in all societies based on societally or culturally specific behaviours.

Hong Kong, with its unique political, economic and social background, displays diverse but interesting linguistic varieties both intra and inter cultural groups. Amongst the 90% of the Hong Kong population which is Chinese, over 88% uses Cantonese as their "usual language". Unlike elsewhere in China, children are brought up under the triglossic situation of being taught to write Modern Chinese Language at school but uses Cantonese in vernacular or for cross-ethnic group communication among Chinese, yet learns and practises English as a second language at the same time. (T'sou 1980). Having been a British Colony for more than a hundred years, English being regarded as a High language for all official transactions and international business tradings, a large majority of the local population are not unfamiliar with the language. With the overwhelming influx of advanced technology from abroad and rapid development of a certain kind of "pop-culture" through media propagation, there has been a phenomenal rise of special codes amongst the young in the form of mixed English-Chinese dialect (J. Gibbons on "U-Gay-wa", 1979) and loan-blends.

In my account of apology-markers mostly used in Hong Kong, apart from three standard Chinese expressions, i.e.

對唔住 "deui-m̀h-jyuh"
唔好意思 "m̀h-hóu-yi-si"
唔該 "m̀h-gòi"[1]

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1 Yale system of romanizations are used throughout this research.

I have included "Sorry" which is growing in use amongst the young and therefore worth looking into. But before I move to discuss the individual apology markers, I think it may be important to bring out the role of contextual constraints that affect verbal productions in communicative acts.

David Crystal in his Dictionary of Linguistics & Phonology 1980 referred to context as "the total non-linguistic background to a text or utterance, including the immediate situation in which it is used, and the awareness by speaker and hearer of what has been said earlier and of any relevant external beliefs or presuppositions". This puts context in great perspective, concerning a lot of ground and includes not just the immediate setting and topic of verbal exchange but almost everything that is non-verbal, such as the individual's background and attitudes and the whole social set-up under what may be called culture.

When a person learns a language and tries to use it effectively, he not only needs to master the linguistic forms of the language, but, in Halliday's terms, "to relate the linguistic form to extra-linguistic situation". Context refers to the real world, sometimes people label it as "social context" or "situational context". Context is important for the listener if he is to make sense of an utterance spoken, or reversedly speaking, it is also important to the speaker if he is to effect certain performative utterances. According to Roy Turner (1970), for people in discourse, the interactional location of the utterance in question is the context or speech situation, and the analysis of such an utterance depends on a lot of conditions . Here Roy Turner is more interested in situational context, but what he referred separately as other "conditions" are part and parcel of what David Crystal called context. This broad view of context is also adopted by John Lyons (1972:572) when he described context as "a theoretical construct,

in the postulation of which the linguist abstracts from the actual situation and establishes as contextual all the factors which, by virtue of their influence upon the participants in the language-event, systematically determine the form, the appropriateness or the meaning of utterances". From a stylistic point of view, it is an attempt to see what are some of the variants that make people say one thing and not the other. As Labov says (1972a:98)

> Social and stylistic variation presuppose the option of saying 'the same thing' in several different ways. That is, the variants are identical in significance or truth value, but opposed in their social and/or stylistic significance.

A. 對唔住 "deui-m̀h-jyuh"

This is the standard formulaic expression taught to children as well as non-native speakers of Cantonese for apologizing. 對唔住 "deui-m̀h-jyuh" is the form widely used by Cantonese speakers whereas 對不起 "deui-bu-chi" is the literary form, the written form and also the Mandarin form. Pre-school children in Hong Kong who have not yet mastered the intricate semantics of alternate expressions would produce 對唔住 "deui-m̀h-jyuh" as the only form of expressive for saying sorry, irrespective of the occasion, role relationship of the interlocutors or other variables in the circumstances. Because this is a kind of formulaic expression for social intercourse, it is generally acceptable when used in most circumstances and they are usually cited without much facial expression or prosodic peculiarities. However, as a standard form for apologizing, it is considered today by many people as a form for formal usage, for conveyance of a more marked apology, or when the speaker is conscientious about the status of participants in discourse. In other words a higher frequency of occurrence of the form 對唔住 "deui-m̀h-jyuh" would be expected from a more strict and disciplined character than from a man on the streets or from labourers and hawkers.

Based on this social concept, 對唔住 "deui-m̀h-jyuh" is considered a bit condescending for older folks or people of the older generation to say to someone much younger particularly across different generations within a family. Culturally, it does seem less often and much more difficult for a Chinese person of high standing to make this form of apology to a junior person, more difficult, say, than the English version of "I'm sorry .....". For example, a boss who has to dismiss his subordinate because of financial problem of the company has

no choice but to apologize with "deui-m̀h-jyuh". Likewise, the father who had misjudged his son and therefore reprimanded him severely would have to use this particular way of saying how deeply sorry he is. Should this be the case, the utterance may be made very solemnly and the expression would adequately signify the state of regret the speaker was in.

It is interesting to note that amongst the apology markers being discussed, the 3 native experessions all contain the negative marker 唔 m̀h. It is not used as a denial or disagreement, but rather, a modest acknowledgement of deviation from certain standards or standard conduct.

Whilst the 'positive' form is 對得住 deui-dāk-jyuh, nobody says this because it is the expected behaviour or norm. Only when things go wrong then one has to acknowledge 對唔住 deui-m̀h-jyuh. Likewise 好意思 hóu-yi-si is possible and is only found in statements for asserting the appropriateness and fairness of approaching someone or doing something. However, the 'negative' form 唔好意思 m̀h-hóu-yi-si marks out the act as something shouldn't have been or done, with meaning extended to account for the speaker's feeling of guilt in causing any unpleasant consequences. Similarly, 唔該 m̀h-gòi is a 'negative' form of 應該 yīng gòi with 應 yīng omitted in the negativization process. What 應該 ying-gòi stands for is should, and the apologetic expression of 唔該 is 'should not', relevant to occasions when one needs to say "You shouldn't have done this for me", with the added implication ..... "but thank you for that."

B. 唔好意思"m̀h-hóu-yi-si"

唔好意思 "m̀h-hóu-yi-si" and 對唔住 "deui-m̀h-jyuh" are two very similar apology markers. They are similar in the sense that there are a lot of overlaps in the context and usage of these two expressions. For example, both can be used as opening remarks in defence strategy. For interrupting a group's conversation or a staff at work, either "deui-m̀h-jyuh" or "m̀h-hóu-yi-si" can be employed. For indicating that the seat in the library has already been reserved, again, either of the two expressions would be appropriate where "deui-m̀h-jyuh" appears too formal and obvious, "m̀h-hóu-yi-si" is preferred.

"m̀h-hóu-yi-si" also bears a sense of embarrassment and awkwardness. A salesgirl who had kept the customer waiting while searching for the right item used "m̀h-hóu-yi-si" when she returned to say that the item was unavailable. A bank teller who has to ask the customer to make out his signature several times for validation would use "m̀h-hóu-yi-si". Whilst "deui-m̀h-jyuh" is a straightforward "I'm sorry" in acknowledgement of offence done, "m̀h-hóu-yi-si" has that something extra and involves an element of guilt or responsibility on the part of the speaker. That is why many people consider "m̀h-hóu-yi-si" as more genuine and sincere and is used more often among friends or acquaintances. If a friend seeks your help which you cannot provide you can say "對唔住，幫你唔到添" "deui-m̀h-jyuh, bòng néih m̀h-dóu tìm" (I'm sorry that I can't help you) in which you are fulfilling a social obligation of apologizing under the circumstances and indicating a sense of finality and conclusiveness to the event. On the other hand, if "m̀h-hóu-yi-si" is used instead, it would add more sentiment to your apology as if you too feel emotionally upset by the fact that you cannot provide help.

If the speaker wishes to make an extended apology involving explanation, offer of penance "devowal of the wrong way of behaving"

(Goffman 1971) etc, both "deui-mh-jyuh" and "mh-hou-yi-si" are acceptable. However, for short quick apologies such as on stepping one's toes on a bus or train while passing, the standard "deui-mh-jyuh" is employed.

Hymes analyses speech acts as being constrained, generated with reference to a number of factors - particpants, setting, scene, form of message, topic, purpose, key, channel, norms of interaction/ interpretation, and genre. This factor model gives light to the "ethnography of speaking" but does not provide the solution regarding the range of appropriateness of a given utterance. There are often cases where lines of distinction are so fine and that people keep messing up with random outbrusts that make any generalization and organization of data extremely difficult. Although it has been a common belief that "deui-mh-jyuh" is a more marked form of apology and therefore appropriate for more serious offences. One must not ignore the fact that people may opt to use "mh-hou-yi-si" in real life as a means of avoiding the harshness of having to admit to guilt and error, particulary on occasions involving misunderstanding or confusion. A customer who had ordered 'soup of the day' for a long time and had taken the trouble to remind the waiter and the captain of the order, was very disappointed to find it was not available only after he had finished all the other courses. The waiter, as would be expected, apologized profusely saying 唔好意思.未有例湯;頭先已經問過 captain 佢都話有.但係廚房未預備好 "mh-hou-yi-si, meih yauh laih-tong, tauh-sin yi-ging mahn-gwo Captain, keuih dou wah yauh, daahn-haih chyuh-fong juhng meih yuh-beih hou."

(I'm sorry that the soup is not ready. I have asked the captain and he confirmed that it would be available, but the kitchen staff

informed it would not be ready yet) I consider that having reassured the customer of the availability of soup while failing to provide the item within a reasonable time is a serious offence. However, one would never expect a repentent husband who had injured his wife with a chopper to apologize with a "m̀h-hóu-yi-si" but rather the grave and all healing "deui-m̀h-jyuh". Likewise, a driver who has knocked down a pedestrian with his car, or a diner who kicked his guest (who's sharing the same table) on the leg by accident would not have used "m̀h-hóu-yi-si". A generalization that can be made from the above incidents is "deui-mh-jyuh" is the appropriate form to use when the offense involves certain physical injuries done.

It would be of interest to look also into the syntactic environment where these two expressions may occur. Syntactically, "deui-mh-jyuh" can be used independently as well as with other constituent structures in an utterance.

When "deui-m̀h-jyuh" is used alone, it must be said right after the act of wrong, and quite agreeably with the natural phonetic sound of the expression, spoken with a low tone. As a reinforcement of the message, the speaker often chooses to nod his head while saying "deui-m̀h-jyuh" - this is a gesture to indicate recognition of the fault and responsibility. If it is not used independently, the phrase "deui-m̀h-jyuh" is used as what Erving Goffman seems to suggest as the "access ritual" in discourse (1971). It refers to the whole ritual of interaction between individuals at the onset of their contact, (and subsequent contacts during a set period of time) or at the time of their taking leave of one another. An apology could be a single utterance of "deui-m̀h-jyuh" but it can also be expanded into a speech event, this of course, dependent on the propositional content, the roles of the communicators and their relationship and perhaps, the

competence of the speaker, all these, again - the contextual variants. If an expanded form of apology has already been made at the start, the person will not be expected to talk about it in great length the second time he meets the person on the same occasion or on the same evening. If "deui-mh-jyuh" is to be contained as part of an utterance the sequencing rule is it is almost always used at the onset of people's utterance, I say almost because I noticed there may be exceptions.

This is where "m̀h-hóu-yi-si" is different, for it can be placed at different points of utterance and it seems that when people wish to start utterance by drawing to the wrong act first and then the apologetic phrase, they prefer using "mh-hou-yi-si".

For example:

頭先嚇咗你一跳，真係唔好意思。

"Tauh-sin haak-jo neih yat tiu, jan-haih mh-hou-yi-si."

or 唔好意思喎，嚇咗你一跳

"m̀h-hóu-yi-si wo, haak-jó néih yat tiu."

both meaning (Sorry for having scared you just now).

Going back to the expression of "deui-m̀h-jyuh" and its rather distinct use as opener in utterances, the variety of prediction that comes after "deui-mh-jyuh" falls into patterns of four types:-

Namely,

1. "deui-m̀h-jyuh" + [address]

   and its expanded version

   Examples are:

   (i) [deui-m̀h-jyuh] + [address]

   e.g.對唔住，小姐/太太/Susan

   "Deui-m̀h-jyuh, síu-jé/taai táai/Suan

   (I'm sorry lady/madam/Susan.)

- used for formal occasions

- shows politeness and concern

- reflects role-relationship of speaker and hearer

(ii) [deui-mh-jyuh] + [address] + [explanation]

a) 對唔住 Amy, 我正話幫個女沖涼.

"Deui-mh-jyuh Amy, ngóh jèng-wah bāng go néui chung lèuhng."

(I'm sorry Amy, I was just giving my daughter a bath)

b) 對唔住 Amy, 我俾我啲學生阻住咗.

"Deui-mh-jyuh Amy, ngóh béi ngóh dī hahk-sāang jo-chìh-jó."

(I'm sorry Amy, but I was held up by my students.)

- spoken in close proximity to wrong act

(iii) [deui-mh-jyuh] + [address] + [referent]

a) 對唔住太太, 整污糟咗你件衫.

"Deui-mh-jyuh, tai tái, jing-wū-jòu-jó néih gihn sāam."

(I'm sorry madam for making your dress dirty.)

b) 對唔住太太, 洗唔洗得乾淨㗎?

"Deui-mh-jyuh, tai tái, sái-mh-sái-dāk gòn-jehng gihn sāam?"

(I'm sorry madam, can it be washed?)

- explanation withheld

- respectful apology

(iv) [deui-mh-jyuh] + [address] + [explanation] + [referent]

a) 對唔住, 太太, 正話塞車, 所以遲咗.

"Deui-mh-jyuh, tai tái, jing-wah sāk chē, só-yíh chìh-jó."

"I'm sorry madam, there was a traffic jam and so I was late."

b) 對唔住, 太太, 我遲到係因為正話塞車.

"Deui-mh-jyuh, tai tái, ngóh chìh-dou haih yàn-waih jing-wah sāk-chē."

"I'm sorry madam for being late because there was a traffic jam."

- full apology given

2. [deui-m̀h-jyuh] + [referent]

and its expanded version

Examples are:

(i) [deui-m̀h-jyuh] + [referent]

a) 對唔住，我遲咗

"Deui-m̀h-jyuh, ngóh chìh-jó."

"I'm sorry I'm late."

b) 對唔住，我印錯咗。

"Deui-m̀h-jyuh, ngóh yàn-cho-jó."

"I'm sorry I misprinted."

- explanation withheld

(ii) [deui-m̀h-jyuh] + [referent] + [explanation]

a) 對唔住，我嚟遲係因為架車壞咗

"Deui-m̀h-jyuh, ngóh làih-chìh-jó haih yàn-waih ga chē waaih-jó."

"I'm sorry I'm late because the car broke down."

3. [deui-m̀h-jyuh] + [explanation]

(i) [deui-m̀h-jyuh] + [explanation]

a) 對唔住，因為我太飽

"Deui-m̀h-jyuh, yàn-waih ngóh taai báau"

"I'm sorry because I'm too full."

b) 對唔住，我實在太飽

"Deui-m̀h-jyuh, ngóh saht-joih taai báau."

"I'm sorry, I'm just too full."

- referent embedded

(11) deui-mh-jyuh + explanation + referent

a) 對唔住，架車壞咗，所以遲到

"Deui-mh-jyuh, ga chē waaih-jó, só-yíh chìh-dou."

"I'm sorry, the car broken down, that's why I'm late."

- full apology

b) 對唔住，我上星期唔舒服，所以唔能夠嚟

"Deui-mh-jyuh, ngóh seuhng sìng-kèih mh-syù-fuhk, só-yíh mh nàng-gau leìh."

"I'm sorry I was not well last week, so I couldn't come."

- apologising for something long past

4. deui-mh-jyuh + information

Example are:

deui-mh-jyuh + information

e.g. 對唔住，有人搵你． "Deui-mh-jyuh, yáuh yàhn wán néih."

"Excuse me, someone is looking for you."

- apologising for interrupting

Let us now examine the first set of examples in greater detail. The form of an overt address is important. It not only signifies the role-relationship in the speech event as seen by the speaker but can also reinforce or reverse the whole apology by the way it is presented.

To address someone as tai-tái (Madam) or siu-jé (Miss) can be a delicate question. Even when siu-tse is used in the opening remark, the tone used can be interpreted variously as a respectful, a satirical, or even teasing address, dependent on the characters involved in the exchange and the intention of the speaker. The address employed may also reflect the social background of the speaker. In the markets we hear hawkers addressing housewives and female buyers as 'dai-gù' which is equivalent in sense to Madam but never used in high society. Likewise, people may address a stranger as 'a-sūk' (uncle) or 'a-sám' (auntie)

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despite the fact that they are not related. For the lower-class, this form of address is reserved for the clansmen and if used for strangers, a very respectful address. However, if one is not careful, the use of the same address 'a -sùk' can bear a diminutive effect and has the sense of slighting the hearer, regarding him as of inferior rank than the speaker.

Basically an overt address functions to attract attention at the onset of a discourse. As part of an apology, a proper address helps to show respect or concern for the hearer as well as sincerity of the speaker. It is also quite normally found when the apology is directed to strangers or less familiar subjects. Syntactically, the address constituent can come before or after the apology marker.

For friends or very familiar subjects, either a covert address (e.g. 'aye' or 'waih' (hey) or even exclamations such as 'a' or 'aiyah') or same informal overt address as 'lóuh-pòh' for wife are used. More often than not, there is complete omission of an address in an apology which is either very informal or much elaborated.

In example 1(i), the use of an address after "deui-mh-jyuh" is more polite and in doing so, speaker shows more respect to hearer than using just "deui-mh-jyuh" alone, such usage can actually facilitate the speaker to initiate an interaction whereas with "deui-mh-jyuh" alone, it does not signify any intention of the speaker to elaborate on the act. Thus we may have, e.g. when I called on my friend using the telephone it took her a long time to finally come through, the first thing she said to me was "對唔住 Amy, 我正啱幫個女沖涼 ." "Deui-mh-jyuh Amy, ngóh jing-wah bòng go néui chung-lèuhng." (I'm sorry Amy, I was just giving my daughter a bath.) Here then, the syntactic form of the expression takes the shape of [deui-mh-jyuh] + [address] + [explanations]

On another occasion when my colleague said she would come into my room in 5 minutes, but was only able to appear half an hour late, the first thing she said was "對唔住, Amy, 我俾我啲學生阻住咗."

"Deui-mh-jyuh Amy ngóh béi ngóh dī hohk-sāang jo-chìh-jó."

(I'm sorry Amy I was held up by my students.)

In the above 2 examples, the referent (that is the subject of reference) is embedded. This would only be possible if the apology is expressed close to the time the wrong act was committed, or that through certain non-verbals, referent was recognised by both speaker and hearer.

But of course we can substitute the explanation constituent with the [referent] and drop the explanation all together. So we have a form conforming to the structure at 1(iii)

[deui-mh-jyuh] + [address] + [referent]

For example, a waiter having spilled a drop of sauce onto the customer's dress may say "對唔住太太, 整污糟咗你件衫 "

"Deui-mh-jyuh, taai táai, jing-wū-jòu-jó néih gihn sāam."

(I'm sorry Madam for spoiling your dress.)

Should the woman quickly uses a napkin to brush the stain on her dress, the waiter could have commented "對唔住, 太太 "

"deui-mh-jyuh, taai táai." (I'm sorry madam.)

and referring to the act of brushing stain away -

洗唔洗得乾淨嘅?

"Sái-mh-sái-dāk gon-jehng ga?" (Can it be cleaned?)

In fact it is not infrequent to find an apology ending with a question directed to the Hearer. The question in fact can be an expression of concern or an offer of alternative or repair. Because these questions

usually are related to the "object of regret"[1], for simplicity sake, they can be considered as part of the referent in our analysis of apology utterances.

Another example is when you step on a child's foot and she expresses pain with her face, you might say "對唔住妹妹,係唔係好痛呀"

"Deui-m̀h-jyuh, muih múi, haih-m̀h-haih hóu tung a?"

(I'm sorry girl, is it very painful?)

On the occasions just described, the explanation or excuse for the wrong act is not given. Whilst the examples in 1(ii) appear more spontaneous and sincere, the example in 1(iii) seems more formal. To be hypothetical, the speaker who only makes reference to the apology without explaining further may be avoiding to justify himself, to disclose his reason, or simply thinks the hearer is not interested to know anyway. Comparing the utterances 1(iii)(a) with 1(iii)(b), the latter seems a bit more apologetic as the referent used expresses speaker's concern over the consequence of the fault.

The choice of speaking one way or the other brings into mind Ervin Tripp's concept of alternation rules in discourse (1972). He suggests that the interactant's speech realization in communication, the actual address he used, must be seen in comparison to the alternative choices he had, because only then are we able to evaluate his choice. With alternation rules we can focus on why an utterance is chosen in a given situation at a given time by an interactant from a whole set of possible utterances.

To continue with the possible expansion of utterance starting with [deui-m̀h-jyuh] + [address]

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3 Coulmas in'"Poison to Your Soul" Thanks and Apologies Contrastively Viewed.' Conversational Routine 1981 writes "They are directed towards some action or event or a consequence thereof. This part of the course of events is considered negative and unwanted for the recipient of the apology. His interlocutor sees a reason for regret in it."

We have utterances like 1(iv), i.e.

[deui-mh-jyuh] + [address] + [explanations] + [referent]

Example a) the chauffeur apologised for turning up late by saying

"對唔住(呀)太太,塞車塞得好緊要,所以遲咗。"

"Deui-mh-jyuh a tai tái, sāk chē sāk dāk hóu gān yiu, só-yíh chìh-jó."

(I'm sorry Madam, there was a bad traffic jam and I was late.)

Whilst it may be possible to express that alternatively in English as (I'm sorry Madam, I'm late because of the traffic jam.), the switching of the last constituent, i.e. before explanation and right after address, is not considered to be the norm.

An American who had taught English in Mainland China once noted that Chinese students there were very conscientions to give explanations for their mistakes. They would apologize and explain as a matter of priority to anything else. He commented that this was not the case in the States.

One informant also remarked that Chinese logic of 因果 "yàn gwó" (cause and effect) is rather deep rooted, and so Chinese people tend to organize their speech and rhetoric following the idea of 因 "yàn" (the cause) first before the 果 "gwó" (the effect or result). So any reversal of this sequential rule would sound awkward.

Now let us move to the other patterns of structural variations beginning with "deui mh jyuh". This refers to 2 in which we have

[deui-mh-jyuh] + [referent]

A common example is to have a person who is late for a date apologising.

"對唔住,我遲咗。"

"deui-mh-jyuh, ngoh chìh-jó."

(I'm sorry I'm late.)

and if he wishes to explain, he will probably say something like 3(ii)(a) rather than 2(ii)(a). Again we find preference of explanation

first, referent second. This seems to point out how cultural differences affect ways people speak, how such contraint mold the speech utterance. Apart from analysing the situation from the cultural logic point of view, it is not impossible to attribute this to Chinese people's concept of discipline and need for clearance should my offence or wrong be committed For the case of Chinese students in Mainland China, fear of being punished may be a further reason for the evident need to giving explanations.

Using the same speech structure but in the context of 3(ii)(b): your friend who was not able to turn up at your party last week says to you. "對唔住，我上星期唔舒服，所以唔能夠嚟。"

"Deui-mh-jyuh, ngóh seuhng sìng-kèih mh syù-fuhk, só-yíh mh nàng-gau lèih."

(I'm sorry I was not well last week therefore I was unable to come.)

This particular usage of explanation before referent has yet another implication. The speaker here is referring to something long past and the time reference is therefore placed in the fore together with the explanation to be followed by the referent. This is considered more natural to say then" 對唔住，上星期我唔嚟得，係因為我唔舒服

"Deui-mh-jyuh, ngóh mh leih dāk haih yàn waih ngóh mh syù fuhk,"

(I'm sorry I couldn't come last week because I was not well.)

would sound most awkward.

In the last few examples, I have been drawing instances when people use explanation before referent, but to use referent before explanation is not impossible but the acceptability would very much depend on the form of expression.

e.g. We can say

"對唔住，無耐到書添，已話太擠啦"

"Deui-mh-jyuh, mouh daai dou syù tim, jíng-wah taai gón lah"

(I'm sorry I haven't brought the book. I was in such a rush just now.)

or "對唔住，我忘記咗，呢排太忙啦 "

"Deui-mh-jyuh, ngóh mòhng-gei-jó, ni paai taai mòhng lā."

(I'm sorry I forgot. I have been very busy.)

From the above examples it seems that the use of connective 'yan waih' is a form of constraint in spoken form because it sounds too literary and conceited and is therefore usually left out. Furthermore, if the speaker opts to speak of referent before explanation, it may be true he is formalizing the apology, or that he is himself rather taken by surprise by the mistake or error, or he himself still in a state of confusion.

In a further example in 3(i), when your colleague insists that you go out with him for lunch, you shake your head and say "對唔住，我實在太飽 " "Deui-mh-jyuh, ngóh saht-joih taai báau." (I'm sorry I'm just too full) but not an incomplete and suspended sentence like "對唔住，因為我太飽 "

"Deui-mh-jyuh, yàn-waih ngóh taai báau."

(I'm sorry because I'm too full).

In other words, once the connective 因為 Yàn-waih is used for beginning the 'reason for', the 'that is why' (所以 só-yí) must be used to complete the explanatory clause. This does not work vice versa, as examples like 1(iv)a and 3(ii) a & b show.

Like 1(ii), the referent is embedded, which means the apology must be made immediately after the refusal. If I may apply John Gumperz' idea of conversational inference which he defines as the situated or context-bound process of interpretation by means of which participants in a conversation assess others' intention and on which they base their response (1977), I venture to say that the speaker of 3(b) in stating his apology in this way, places emphasis on the inevitability or the uncontrollable force of

whatever that is obstructing him from meeting certain task/demand/requirement. In speech, the message is often driven home by reinforcers such as tonal stress on 實在 "saht-join" (really) together with the shaking of head.

In another dramatic situation, say, when a man who's struck by the beauty and charm of a girl has been staring at her for quite some time, feels obliged to explain and apologize when the girl returns her gaze, utters "對唔住，你實在太靚啦 "

"Deui-mh-jyuh, néih saht-joih taai lehng lā."

(I'm sorry but you are too attractive.)

This as I said would be very dramatic, but nevertheless the utterance infers the speaker's total uncontrollable admiration for the girl has made him impolite. We do not know whether the expressive is sincere or not as we do not know the ethnic and communicative backgrounds of the interlocutors.

In 4, I have separately set out a form comprising of "deui-mh-jyuh plus [information] . But this really relates closely to the last category, i.e. "deui-mh-jyuh" + [explanation] , because what we are in fact doing is to apologize for interrupting, though some may look upon it as a device for making interruptions rather than apologizing. So, if we have a group of people talking together, a person interrupts and apologizes, he gives immediate explanation as to why he's interrupting - such as "有人搵你 " "Yáuh yahn wan néih." (Someone is looking for you) or "Deui-mh-jyuh, ngóh yáuh sih." 對唔住，我有事 (I'm sorry, I have some other business.) He could have absented himself from the scene with 'Deui-mh-jyuh', but out of courtesy, informs or explains that he has something else to attend to.

I've already gone through the basic patterns under which "deui-mh-jyuh" can occur. Now I wish to go back to the point I made earlier about the possible irregularities in "deui-mh-jyuh" sequencing rule.

In the example:

connective + deui insertion m̀h jyuh + particle

算我對你唔住啦.

"Syun ngóh deui néih m̀h jyuh lā."

(Let's say that I'm sorry about it.)

we have a connective 算我 "syun ngóh" in front followed by "deui-m̀h-jyuh" with insertion 你 "néih" in between. The indirect translation should be something like (Let's assume that I'm sorry .....) or (Take it that I'm sorry .....). The connective 算我 "syun ngóh" has reversed the sincerity implied in the phrase "deui-m̀h-jyuh", the expressive no longer matches the world and it's not quite the same as feeling sorry or regret. When used, the stress falls on "deui" and the tone sounds embittered, whereas if stress is on 算 "syun" the tone sounds resigned, the expression of which marks a conclusion to whatever has been discussed before concerning who's right or wrong. The same positioning of Deui-m̀h-jyuh can be found in utterances beginning with other connectives such as 係 "haih" for admitting to guilt in which case the speaker usually refers to the complaint first and then the apology itself.

In most cases when "deui-m̀h-jyuh" deviates from its normal sequencing order, it is used with particles such as 呀 "há " or 喎 "wō". The addition of "há " and "wō" is again a device for summing up whatever detailed discussion or explanation that precedes.

C. 唔該 m̀h-gòi

Unlike the pair "m̀h-hóu-yi-si" and deui-m̀h-jyuh", "m̀h-gòi" is more restrictive in use as an apology marker and the usage more clearly defined. However, the expression itself, (in line with Firth's contextual theory of meaning), can be of various meanings depending on the whole situation which form the context of utterance.

According to the Dictionary of Cantonese words "廣州話方言詞典" by Yiu et al (1981), "m̀h-gòi" can take on meanings ranging from thank you, please, excuse me, beg of you, trouble you, etc. If a good deed is done, one says "m̀h-gòi" to express gratitude and appreciation. However, when one wants to get down from a bus crowded with people, he is using "m̀h-gòi" to say all of the above - (excuse me please ..... thank you for your troubles .....). If one wants to persuade another to do certain things for him, he also starts by saying 唔該呀 "m̀h-gòi-ńgih ..." (please, will you .....) and then finishes off happily saying 唔該晒 "m̀h-gòi-saai" which is a big comprehensive (thank you) the effect of the particle 晒 /saai/ which serves as an intensifier.

D. Sorry

The use of "sorry" for apologizing among the locals is only a recent phenomenon. Although the origin is not traceable, but it is believed to have originated from middle class speakers who were the society's intelligensia with more exposure to native speakers of English. The word "sorry" is catching and not difficult to pronounce (although some have acquired the distorted version of /sɔ:ɬi/ intentionally and unintentionally, and sociolinguistically, it may be possible to separate out the sincere or formal apology/sɔri/ from the frivolous informal /sɔ:li/, the original bilinguals from the imitators.)

Usage of "sorry" has noticeably caught on among the young and even those who know no other English words may be found using this form of apology to another non-English speaking local. It is used more often between interlocutors who are of similar age. From television presentations, dramas and real-life observations, more and more people seem to turn to use this quick and effective way of apologizing rather than making a mental search for the appropriate choice of "deui-m̀h-jyuh" and "m̀h-hóu-yi-si" in everyday transactions.

There is much flexibility in the use of "sorry", situationally and syntactically. However, one would not normally expect the use of "sorry" when the offence made is serious.

Chapter IV

The Experiments

So far in my discussion of the social norms of apologizing as occurring in Hong Kong, I have used data drawn from introspection, observation and discussions with informants to form the larger basis of supporting evidence from which certain assumptions on the uses and implicit changes in meaning of alternate expressions have been set. In order to check out the assumptions made in the previous chapters, I have conducted two controlled experiments in the way of role simulations.

Experiment I

The experiment involves a group of ten native speakers of Cantonese. They are all male, of different professions and range from twenty-six to fifty years of age. The subjects were given role cards with descriptions of a number of situations involving problems ranging from minor slip-ups to more serious accidents in which they have to apologize. The aim of this experiment is to find out how different contexts or variables actually affect the performance of an apology.

The variables that can be identified to have influence over the choice of expressives are:

(i) nature of offence

(ii) gravity of offence

(iii) situational context

(iv) role relationship of speaker and hearer

(v) sex of speaker and hearer

(vi) age of speaker and hearer

(vii) educational background, and

(viii) social background

For a small scale experiment, there are problems in finding sufficient data to include all of the above in great details. Take age of participants for example, it would not be possible to consider different age levels, but rather, I have tried to cover at least two main categories using 'thirty-five' as the parting line. Those above 'thirty-five' can be considered as more matured and experienced, more characteristic of the older school of thought bearing certain attitudes and values that may differ from those who are young and active, still aspiring and perhaps more self-centered.

The educational background affects one's upbringing and mentality, and should be very significant in any behavioural,psychological, or sociolinguistic studies. However, it is also reasonable to believe that as one is immersed in a working situation, the role relationship becomes a more dominant factor, and strategic competence, which does not necessarily correspond to the innate competence of the speaker in the Chomskyan sense, will also greatly affect the production of an outburst. Furthermore, as this role similation exercise works on the hypothetical, the subject was free to visualize the character who is the hearer of the apology. Different people may have varying degrees of respect or 'fear' of one's wife from dominating to being dominated. The educational and social background of the 'wife' may also differ widely and therefore affect the individual respondent's utterance. However, the nature and background of the 'ghost characters' in the role simulation are not too important as long as there is consistency in the respondent's visualization of these particular images.

The assumption of role for each situation is different, and each situation in turn is developed into 2 or more cases of apologies of differing degrees.

With so many constraints and practical problems, I have compromised to submit the test (or experiment as referred to above) to subjects who can be categorized according to socio-economical background and age. Some candidates, when approached, felt abashed and reluctant to take part, particularly those who have attained certain prominence in career. On the other hand the candidates on the other end of the social ladder were equally difficult, they were highly suspicious and could not follow what were expected of them in the exercise. After much coaxing and explanation, 10 subjects completed the role simulation. The actual instructions given to the subjects in the role cards were as follows:

Role Relationship	Confrontations
1. Father to son	a) Bought the wrong stationery item for son.
	b) Forgot to buy a promised present for son.
2. Master to Servant	a) Forgets to inform the servant that you are not coming back for dinner.
	b) Refuses the servant's request for a holiday.
3. Subordinate to superior	a) Hands in a rough copy of report due to press of time.
	b) Not submitting a report on time.
	c) Forgets about an interview at an appointed time with the boss.
4. Friend to Friend	a) Late for appointment
	b) Not showing up for an appointment
	c) Not able to repay a debt on time.

Role Relationship	Confrontations
5. Husband to Wife	a) Caught coming home late.
	b) Caught going out with other girls.
6. Stranger to Stranger	a) Stepping out of a crowded bus.
	b) Telling someone that the table has been taken in a restaurant.
	c) Caused a slight bump at the bumper in an auto accident.

The utterances were the subjects' involuntary responses in the situations arising. Details of the data collected are presented in Appendix II.

The following is a summary of the results obtained.

TABLE 1

SUBJECTS			APOLOGY MARKERS USED														
	Profession	Age	Situations 1 a	b	2 a	b	3 a	b	c	4 a	b	c	5 a	b	6 a	b	c
A	Technician	32	-	-	MHYS	-	-	-	-	DMJ	-	-	-	-	MG MG	-	DMJ
B	Clerk	29	DMJ	DMJ	DMJ	-	DMJ	DMJ	DMJ	DMJ	DMJ	DMJ	-	-	MG	DMJ (MG)	DMJ
C	*Safety Manager	37	DMJ	-	MHYS	MHYS	MHYS	MHYS	MHYS	+MHYS MHYS	MHYS	-	MHYS	-	MG	DMJ	MHYS
D	*Administration Manager	36	DMJ	DMJ	DMJ	DMJ	DMJ	DMJ	DMJ	DMJ	++DMJ	DMJ	MHYS	DMJ	MG	DMJ	DMJ
E	Messenger	29	-	-	-	-	DMJ	-	DMJ	DMJ	DMJ	-	DMJ	-	DMJ	DMJ	DMJ
F	Teacher	34	-	-	-	DMJ	DMJ	DMJ	DMJ	MHYS	MHYS	+DMJ	-	-	DMJ	DMJ	MHYS
G	Medical Officer	26	-	MHYS	-	-	MHYS	DMJ	+MHYS	DMJ	+MHYS	DMJ	-	-	MG	MHYS	MHYS
H	*Engineer	30	-	-	MHYS	-	-	+DMJ	+MHYS +MHYS	+MHYS	MHYS MHYS	+MHYS	-	-	MG MG	MHYS	-
I	*(Works in an office)#	50	-	DMJ	+DMJ	-	-	+DMJ	+DMJ	DMJ +MHYS	+DMJ	+DMJ	DMJ	+DMJ	DMJ	DMJ	DMJ
J	*Industrial Officer	37	-	-	MHYS	-	-	-	+MHYS	+DMJ	+MHYS	-	+MHYS	-	MG,MG DMJ	MHYS	+MHYS

Footnote

* Income exceeds $10,000
\+ with intensifier
++ use of two intensifiers
( ) expressive for thanking as well

Apology markers:

DMJ = deui-mh-jyuh
MHYS = mh-hóu-yi-si
MG = mh-gòi

= subject wishes to keep profession unidentified

TABLE 2

SPEAKER \ EXPRESSIONS USING DMJ / ITEM NO.	DEUI-MH-JYUH + (ADDRESS) + EXPLANATION + REFERENT	DEUI-MH-JYUH + (ADDRESS) + REFERENT + (EXPLANATION)	DEUI-MH-JYUH + INFORMATION + (EXPLANATION)	DEUI-MH-JYUH	OTHER PATTERNS
A	4(a)				6(c)
B	1 (b) 2(a) 3(a) (b) (c) 4(a) (b) (c) 6 (b) (c)	1(a)			
C	6 (c)	1(a)	6 (b)		
D	1 (b) 2(a) (b) 3(a) (b) (c) 4(a) (b)	1(a) 5 (b) 6 (c)	4 (c) 6 (b)		
E	4 (b)	3(a) (c) 4(a) 6(a) (c)	5(a) 6 (b)		
F	3(a) (b) (c)	2 (b) 4(a)	4 (c) 6 (b)	6(a)	
G		3 (b) 4(a)	4 (c)		
H		3 (b)			
I	2(a) 3 (c) 4 (b) 5 (b)	1 (b) 4(a) 5(a) 6 (c)	4 (c) 6(a) (b)	4 (c)	3(b)
J		4(a)			6(a)

From the data collected, there are certain significant points worth noting:

A. Responses to situations and general speech patterns used

Two-thirds of the utterances contain some sort of apology markers and 50% of utterances involve explanations. This gives an indication of the social regard for making apologies in the situations specified and perhaps the cultural tendency toward providing explanations in cases where apologies are at issue.

DMJ is still the most commonly used form for apologizing(sixty out of ninety-nine cases). Whilst there are situations where speakers may use DMJ or MHYS (e.g. 2(a) 3(c) etc.) or both at the same time (J 6(a) I 4(a)), there are certain cases where DMJ is preferred (1(a), 4(c)). Situation 1(a) concerns the parent's confrontation with child and having to disappoint him because he has probably been negligent or stupid. In situation 4(c), the situation calls for speaker to deal with something most embarrassing that could ever happen between friends. The preference for DMJ here would not be a case of formulaic mechanic response from the speaker, but rather something that reflects the speaker's attitude in the event, the sense of guilt and disappointment in himself.

Comparatively speaking, there were only few cases of apologies with apology marker for situation 1. Only about 4 out of 10 for both (a) and (b) applied markers when speaking to child. This seems to echo a suggestion made earlier that parents or the older generation tend not to apply a direct apology to the young in the way of using overt apology markers, but rather, through more subtle verbalizations.

Interestingly, only 2 cases of apology markers appeared for situation 5(b). Even for 5(a), there were only a 50% usage of marker between husband and wife.

Eric Segal made a sensational statement "Falling in love is not having to say you're sorry" in his novel turned film 'Love Story' 1970. Whilst the truth value in such a statement is highly questionable, one must not overlook the fact that the husband and wife relationship is a very unique one and that much is left unspoken but understood, communicable but by many other more methods than just verbal utterances. In situation 5(b), the absence of apology markers are made good by the prevalence of explanation and excuses much in line with Fraser's strategy 7 which is characterized as a strategy in which the speaker is expressing responsibility for the offending act but where regret is only implied, not entailed.

For situation 6(a) in which the subjects have to apologize in order to get out of a crowded bus all subjects have resorted to the use of overt apology markers. Amongst the 10 responses, seven were mh-gois, with 3 cases of reinforced apology through duplication of the marker within the utterance. This result supports the suggestion that mh-goi is used for anticipatory apology, or what Coulmas refers to as "ex-ante" under the circumstances. Contrastive to situations 1 and 5, apologies using markers and greater span of intonation are found in situation 6 when the speaker is communicating with strangers.

Within situation 6, the different nature of offence for (a) and (c) is distinguishable by the type of apologies conveyed and the manner of utterances. 6(c) is particularly interesting as it involves one of those madcap situations in which both parties tend to blame each other or try to get away from the scrape. The strategies used by speakers actually range from accusatory - expressing regret for the offense - requesting forgiveness for the offense-acknowledging responsiblity for the offending act to offering redress. (Fraser's classification of strategies 5, 6, 7 and 9).

Although Fraser's model of strategies is useful as basis for analysis, it could not be totally transferred and applied to our interpretation of the experiment result. Unlike English, there are just too many cases of apologies found without any apology markers. What seems to be more meaningful is to say that for apologies where markers are absent, the act of apologizing can be performed via other linguistic devices, such as use of exclamation (note speaker F's utterances) raising of questions involving alternate proposals, remedial action, counter-offers, and admission of guilt to be followed by self-defence/explanations).

B. Relating social background with speech utterances

The most 'apologetic' speakers are D, I, C, and B. Except for B, the other 3 subjects belong to the higher income bracket group with corresponding older age.

The most rigid or deadpan style of response come from subject E who is a messenger and least educated of all. His responses mainly fall into the format of [apology marker] + [referent], and the apology marker being always DMJ.

Subject D, the Administration Manager, uses apology markers consistently for all situations and displays a great preference for DMJ. Likewise subject I (a senior personnel also working in an office) uses mainly DMJ as apology marker, and so does subject B, a clerk. This group of most 'apologetic' speakers happen to be all working in a formal office environment and their bias for DMJ may be an indication of the effect their formal working environment has on their speech utterances.

Interesting enough, subject F (a teacher), by profession the most 'vocalized' speaker among the lot, displays great flexibility in style when dealing with the different situations or conveying apologies. A wider range of voicing is also employed strategically

to cope with the events.

The technician, engineer, and industrial officer, on the other hand, are less 'apologetic' and are professionally related. The technician and engineer's responses appear more frivolous than the others, and differences in tone can best be compared with that of the Administration Manager and the Senior Staff working in an office.

When discussing these results, one cannot, of course, rule out the possibility of idiosyncracies and individual traits, the amount of exposure to similar tests or the effects recordings may have on their performance. But taken that such test is not most naturalistic, it is nonetheless a well controlled, practical and systematic investigation, particularly for dealing with such a difficult and specific topic as apologies, done within limited resources and multivarious constraints. The investigator must admit, though, that the validity of test could be strengthened if more subjects of more diverse background are included, but is hopeful that this test may rouse interest in others to pursue further tests in the area.

Experiment II

This part of the experiment deals with not just verbal role simulation but a total involvement play-act in which experimenters were introduced into crowded department stores located in various parts of the city to elicit apologies by means of intentional bumps. Along the lines of the Labovian concept of eliciting authentic data among subjects of different socioeconomical classes, the department stores frequented by the experimenters are regarded as representative of the lower middle and upper middle class. Certain tactics were worked out by two boys (aged 19) to occasion apparent accidental bumps with other shoppers in the store with the aim of gathering natural responses of apologies. The act involves standing in close proximity behind some shoppers who were concentrating on the items on display and to appear 'alarmed' and 'stepped on' as the shoppers turned around. A total of thirty cases were observed, 21 out of the 30 had no response, only one case of deui mh jyuh was collected and the rest comprised of 7 'sorrys' plus one 'excuse me'. Half of the subjects were male and the other half female, their ages range from 15 to 40 (estimated age as actual age could not be ascertained). A summary of the distribution of stores visited and the results obtained is as follows:

LOCATION A MITSUKOSHI

EXPRESSION USED	NIL	NIL	SORRY	NIL	SORRY
PARALINGUISTICS	NIL	WITH A STARE	WITH A STARE	NIL	WITH A STARE
SEX	MALE	FEMALE	FEMALE	FEMALE	FEMALE
AGE	24	32	30	22	18

EXPRESSION USED	Deui-mh-jyuh
PARALINGUISTICS	Slight bow
SEX	FEMALE
Age	26

LOCATION B THE LANDMARK CENTRAL DISTRICT

EXPRESSION USED	NIL	NIL	NIL	SORRY
PARALINGUISTICS	NIL	NIL	NIL	WITH A STARE
SEX	MALE	MALE	MALE	MALE
AGE	35	30	22	36

LOCATION C OCEAN CENTRE

EXPRESSION USED	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	SORRY
PARALINGUISTICS	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
SEX	FEMALE	FEMALE	FEMALE	FEMALE	FEMALE
AGE	15	18	15	18	18

LOCATION D ISETAN

EXPRESSION USED	SORRY	SORRY
PARALINGUISTICS	NIL	NIL
SEX	FEMALE	FEMALE
AGE	16	26

LOCATION E NATHAN ROAD STORES IN YAUMATI DISTRICT

EXPRESSION USED	NIL	NIL	'Excuse me'	NIL	NIL
PARALINGUISTICS	NIL	WITH A STARE	NIL	NIL	NIL
SEX	MALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	MALE
AGE	40	40	32	21	20

EXPRESSION USED	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
PARALINGUISTICS	NIL	NIL	WITH A STARE	NIL	NIL
SEX	MALE	MALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE
AGE	35	36	25	20	25

EXPRESSION USED	NIL	SORRY	NIL
PARALINGUISTICS	NIL	embarrassed	NIL
SEX	FEMALE	FEMALE	MALE
AGE	18	24	15

Some interesting observations can be made from the data collected.

(1) There seems to be a large proportion of no responses or indifference. This raises the question whether the lack of apology is due to self-inhibition typical of the race or whether it is a trait of the present local society.

Noting the not unfamiliar statement that Chinese people are generally more restrained and conservative in expressing their own emotions or feelings but tend to be formal and over-modest with strangers or friends, I tend to view the lack of apology as a truer picture of the local community - something strictly Hong Kong rather than Chinese. It is not too difficult to find an explanation to support this view as Hong Kong has been facing continuous influx of immigrants and refugees who brought along different sets of values and attitudes, the lack of uniform standard and discipline have lent itself a problem to Hong Kong. The forever crowded conditions in and out of the home could also be reason why people consider bumping against another as something inevitable and therefore 'not surprising'. Apologies seemed unnecessary.

(2) Out of the 9 apologies collected, only 2 were elicited among shoppers along Nathan Road in Yaumati District, a lower middle class district. 3 apologies were found in Mitsukoshi, a large Japanese Department Store in Causeway Bay Commercial Centre, another apology was found in a shop within Central District, one in Ocean Centre, a tourist shopping complex in Tsimshatsui, and 2 apologies in another Japanese store in Tsimshatsui - Isetan. Except for the shops along Nathan Road in Yaumati, the other shops are all upper-middle class type of outlets.

On the basis of the data alone, the upper middle class seem to present themselves as better observers of the social etiquette of apologising.

(3) The data have confirmed the point about the popular use of "sorry", even more so than the traditional and perhaps more respectful deui-mh-jyuh for physical injuries or the like. On examining the age-factor, it can be noted that amongst the subjects observed, 11 of them are in the twenties, 6 belong to the teens, 8 of the thirties, and only 2 of the forties. The corpus essentially is based on a young population and the frequent occurrence of "sorry" as opposed to deui-mh-jyuh is not surprising.

(4) Amongst those who apologized, 90% (8 out of 9) are female subjects. This raises the question - are female more polite, more sensitive, more conscientious, better-mannered? or are they, as Lakeoff (1972) refers to their marginality and powerlessness in society more vocalized for want of recognition in the strive for status?

Chapter V

Summary And Concluding Remarks

This study is deemed necessary to help fill the gap of sociolinguistic studies in Hong Kong. The main concern of this paper is to examine how apologies are conveyed in Hong Kong, what linguistic devices are used, and whether there is any interrelationship between language and social structures by the way of apologetic expressions and speakers' background.

The hypothesis made regarding the effects of contextual constraint are tested out in two controlled experiments which are complimentary in nature, yielding data that apparently confirm the points made regarding the usual forms and patterns of apologetic utterances as well as the more significant contextual variables which include role identities, sex, age, and socio-economical background of interlocutors.

The writer does not believe that this is the final analysis of acts of apology in Hong Kong but hopes there are further studies on this topic or in another area of polite exchange.

APPENDIX I

Strategy 1: Announcing that you are apologizing

"I (hereby) apologize for..."

Strategy 2: Stating one's obligation to apologize

"I must apologize for..."

Strategy 3: Offering to apologize

"I (hereby) offer my apology for..."

"I would like to offer my apology to you for..."

Strategy 4: Requesting the hearer accept an apology

"Please accept my apology for..."

"Let me apologize for..."

"I would appreciate it if you would accept my apology for..."

Strategy 5: Expressing regret for the offense

"I'm (truly/very/so/terribly) sorry for..."

"I (truly/very much/so...) regret that I..."

Strategy 6: Requesting forgiveness for the offense

"Please excuse me for..."

"Pardon me for..."

"I beg your pardon for..."

"Forgive me for..."

Strategy 7: Acknowledging responsibility for the offending act

"That was my fault"

"Doing that was a dumb thing to do"

Strategy 8: Promising forbearance from a similar offending act

"I promise you that that will never happen again"

Strategy 9: Offering redress

"Please let me pay for the damage I've done"

Strategy 10: Recantation

Fraser, Bruce 1980 On Apologying, In Coulmas, F. (ed.), Conversational Routines. The Hague: Mouton, 1981.

APPENDIX II

TRANSCRIPTION OF DATA*

Speaker A

1. a) Bún bóu nē, máaihjó faàn laìh, néih wah m̀hngāam a, gám sóyíh tèngyaht joi maáihfaàn béi néih.

   The book, I have already bought. If you say it's not the right one, I can buy the right one back tomorrow.

   b) Gó gihn laíhmaht ngóh máaihjó lā, làuhjó hái gūngsī, tèngyaht daai faànlàih béi néih.

   The gift is bought but I have left it in the office. I can bring it back for you tomorrow.

2. a) A, m̀hhóuyisi, gàmyaht m̀hgeidāk tùngjì néih, ngoh m̀hfaàn làih sihkfaahn tìm.

   Oh I'm sorry I forgot to tell you I'm not coming back for dinner.

   b) Tìngyaht néih seúng ló ga a, m̀hdāk wóh, ngóhdeih chéng haak wóh, sóyíh néih m̀h hóyíh ló ga lā.

   You want to have tomorrow off? Not possible! We're having guests, so you can't take leave.

3. a) Néih gón jyuh yiu gógo report, ngóh haih yíhgìng sé hóu lā, daahn haih nīgo haih sáu sé ge, seúng gám béi néih tái jó sìn, néih yáuh māt comment góng béi ngóh tèng, dou sìh ngóh hóyíh jāp faàn jing kéuih.

*It must be said that translation of corpus has been very difficult as the original speeches are very colloquial, containing a lot of stammerings and pause particles such as 'lè' and 'nè'. The translation therefore tries to capture the proposition content as well as the spirit of illocution, keeping as far as possible the syntactic structure of the constituents.

The report that you want urgently is already finished, but it is only in handwritten form. I'll let you see it first, and if you have any comment, just tell me, I can put things in order.

b) gó go report nē, yìhgā gón gán ga la, jaahmsìh meih dāk jēk.
As for the report, it is being completed, just that it is not quite ready now.

c) Yànwaih ngóh gónjyuh sìhgaan heui hòi wuí gám, sóyíh jauh móuh faatjí meet dou go appointment, mhjì néih wán ngóh yáuh māt sih lē?
Because I had to rush for a meeting, I could not meet you as arranged. I wonder what you had in mind?

4. a) Deuimhjyuh wók, ngóh yànwaih hóu sākchē, sóyíh chìh jó làih.
I'm sorry, there's a traffic jam, that's why I am late.

b) Gàmyaht ngóh ngāamngāam yiu attend yātgo emergency, sóyíh ngóh gón mh dóu làih lā.
Yesterday I had to attend an emergency so I could not make it on time.

c) Juhng meih chēutlèuhng wóh, ngóh jaahmsìh meih buht dou chín, gwo géi yaht lā, gwo dò géi yaht, ngóh chēut lèuhng wàahn béi néih lā.
The pay is not out yet, I can't get enough money. Give me a few more days, give me a few more days and I'll repay you when my salary is out.

5. a) Ngóh ngāamngāam hòiwúi, tùhng lóuh sai hòiwuí hòidou yìhgā jà, yauh sākchē a, sóyíh gam chìh sìn faàn dou làih.
I was just having a meeting with the boss until now, and there's the traffic jam, that's why I'm late.

b) Néih gó go gin dou ge haih gūngsī ge PR làihga ngóh tùhng maàih keuih heui site jouh fóngmahn ga.

The one you saw was the company's P.R., I was going site inspection with her.

6. a) "Hey" mhgòi je mé, mhgòi je mé.

Hey, excuse me ..... excuse me .....

b) Waih, daaihlóu, nījèung tói ngóh dáng gán ga wóh, néih ló gwo daih yih jèung lā.

Oh mister, I am waiting for this table, you go and get another one.

c) A hāai chàn síusíu jēk, mhgok ge, deuimhiyuh wóh.

Oh, it's just a minor bump, hardly noticeable. Sorry!

Speaker B

1. a) Deui m̀hjyuh a, ngóh nīchi máaih cho jó béi néih, hahchi máaih faàn ngāam béi néih a.

I'm sorry I bought the wrong thing for you, I'll buy the right thing next time.

b) A deuim̀hyuh a, ngóh m̀hgei dāk máaih gihn laíhmaht béi néih tìm. Ngóh tèng yaht máaih faàn béi néih a.

Oh I'm sorry, I forgot to buy the present for you! I'll get it tomorrow.

2. a) Deuim̀hjyuh a, ngóh m̀hgei dāk tùhng néih góng ngóh gàmmáahn m̀h faàn làih sihk faahn tìm.

I'm sorry I forgot to tell you I'm not coming back for dinner tonight.

b) Néih yiu ló ga? Daahnhaih tèngyaht hóudò yéh jouh wóh, waahkjé daih yaht ló lā hóu ma?

You want a holiday? But tomorrow there are many things to do, maybe some other day, OK?

3. a) Deuim̀hjyuh, gó fahn report ngóh gónm̀hchit béi néih, só yíh yuhng sáu sé, hóu chóu a.

I'm sorry, I can't give you that report yet. It's in handwritten form, very rough.

b) Deuim̀hjyuh, ngóh m̀hgeidāk jouh fahn report.

I'm sorry I forgot to do the report.

c) Deuim̀hjyuh, ngóh mòhnggei jó ngóh gàm jìu haih yeuk jó làih gin néih ga.

I'm sorry I forgot I made an appointment to see you this morning.

4. a) Waih, deui m̀hjyuh a, ngóh ngāam ngāam chēut mùhnhàu jip dou go dihnwá sóyíh làih chìh jó.

Hey I'm sorry, I received a call just when I was leaving, that's why I'm late.

b) Deui mhjyuh a, ngóh chàhmyaht ngāam ngāam yáuh dī sih mhdāk hàahn laìh.

I'm sorry, it happened I was busy yesterday so I couldn't come.

c) Deui mhjyuh, ngóh ngāam ngāam mhfòngbihn, só yíh béi mhdou dī chín néih.

I'm sorry, things are not available, so I can't pay you the debt yet.

5. a) Gàmmaáhn, dá yùhn màhjéuk yèhng jó chín, béi dī pàhngyáuh lāai jó heui yiu ngóh chéng siuyé, sóyíh chìhjó faàn laìh.

Tonight I won the mah-jong game. The friends took me out for some snacks, so I'm late.

b) Ngóh móuh, ngóh ngāamngāam johngdou go gauh tùhnghohk, kéuih wah jauh laìh yiu heui daihyih dou deihfong, sóyíh ngóh jauh pùih keuíh sihk chāan faahn, tùhng màaih tái tou hei.

Nothing really, I just bumped into an old classmate, she said she's leaving Hong Kong soon, so I dined with her and accompanied her to the movies.

6. a) Waih, mhgòi néih je je, ngóh yiu lohk chè a.

Hey, excuse me please, I am getting off here.

b) A, sìnsàang, deui mhjyuh a, nijèung tói haih ngóh dáng jó hóu noih lā, juhng yáuh hóudò yàhn meih lèih ga. Nī jèung tói, ngóh yiu saai ge, mhgòi néih dáng gwo daihyih jèung lā.

Oh mister, I'm sorry, but I have been waiting for this table for a long time, I need the whole table, the others are not yet here. Please wait for another table.

c) Deuimhjyuh a Sir, haih ngóh yàtsih mhsíusàm, johng chàn néih ga chè, waahkjé dáng háh taíhàh yáuh móuh ..... ngóh pùihfaàn béi néih a.

I'm sorry sir, I was just careless to have hit your car, maybe check and see, ... I can pay you for the damages.

Speaker C

1. a) Deuimhjyuh a, máaih chojó a, tùhng néih joi máaih gwo go a.
I'm sorry it's the wrong item, I'll buy another one for you.

b) Gàmyaht mòhng gwotàuh, mhgeidāk maáih faànlàih beí néih, daihyaht joi máaih gwo gó beí neíh a.
Today was so hectic, just couldn't remember to buy it back, I'll buy it another day.

2. a) Mhhóu yisi a, ngóh yeuk jó yàhn sihkfaahn, gàmmáahn gónmhchit faàn làih sihk.
I'm sorry, I have an appointment tonight, I will not be back for dinner.

b) Mhhóu yisi a, nīpáai beígaáu mòhngdī, jauh mh nàhng gau béi neíh logga ji, daih yaht sìn beí néih lo lā.
I'm sorry, things been rather busy lately, I can't let you have a day off, take you leave some other time.

3. a) Mhhóu yisi a, yànwaih typing gó douh mòhng, gón mhchit dá beí neíh, jaahm sìh beí go chóu góu néih, yùhgwó néih yihngwáih mh múhngi, ngóh joi tùhng néih dá gwo go.
I'm sorry, because the typing pool is busy, this cannot be typed for you on time. If you're not happy with the draft, I'll have it typed out.

b) Mhhóu yisi a, gó go report yíhgìng jouhjó yāt bouh fahn ge lā, daahn néih yáuh dī jìliú meih chàih, chìh dī, beí néih lā, yùhgwó neíh haih mh gaaiyi ge wah nē, ngóh nám ni yāt leúhng yaht beí dou neíh.
I'm sorry, that report is partly done, but the imformation required is not complete, I'll give it to you later if you don't mind .....
I can finish it within these 2 days.

c) Mhhóu yisi a, ngóh gáau chojó yahtjí, ngóh yih waih tèngyaht sìnji haih yáuh go interview tìm.

I'm sorry I got the dates mixed up, I thought the interview with you is for tomorrow.

4. a) Waih jànhaih mhhóu yisi a, gam chìh sìnji làih, ngāam ngāam sāk chē a, Néih jì Hèunggóng déi sāk chē yáuh pàaih sāk hah, mh hóu yisi.

Oh I'm so sorry for arriving so late, there's the traffic jam and you know how traffic jams are like in Hong Kong, I'm sorry.

b) Gàmyaht jànhaih mhhaih géi houchói, yànwaih séung wán néih ge sìhhauh, ngāamngāam yauh béi louhsai jūkjyuhjó, jouh jouh hah gwajó jūng, mhgeidāk jó laih, sevhng chi wán néih yauh wánmhdou, mhhóu yisi a.

Today was really unlucky, as I was trying to meet you the boss held me up with work. While doing my work I forgot about time. When I looked for you, you were not around then. My apologies!

c) Néih jì lā yihgā néih yuht jūnggāan ja, jaahmsìh haih meih yáuh chín waàhn faàn béi néih ji, ngóh nám chēut lèuhng gó jahnsí ji waàhndāk faàn béi néih, yùhgwó néih mh gaaiyi ge wah.

You know it's only the middle of the month, I can't repay you right now, I think I have to wait until the salary is out before I can repay you, if you don't mind, that is.

5. a) Mhhóu yisi a, gam chìh sìn faan làih sihkfaahn, ngāam ngāam hái louh seuhng johngdou gó pàhngyáuh, kìng jó géi geui, sóyíh haih chìhjó, Kìnghah jauh gwojó sìhgaan lā.

I'm sorry to be back so late. Just bumped into a friend on the way back. Having exchanged a few words and it was past time. Just managed a few words and it's so late.

b) Ngóh gam chìh faànlàih haih johng jó A X síujé, hóu noih móuh gin, haih gauh tùhnghohk làih ge. Keúih yáuh dī yéh mahn ngóh seuhnbín daaihàh keúih heui lā, sóyíh haih chìhjó faàn làih.

I'm late because I bumped into Miss X, haven't seen her for a long time, this old classmate of mine. She had some questions to ask so I took the opportunity of showing her around. That explains why I'm late.

6. a) À mhgòi, yeuhng yāt yeuhng lohkchè a.

Sorry, please let me pass through to get off.

b) Deuimhjyuh a, nī jèung toí yíhgíng yáuhjó yàhn lā.

Sorry, the table is taken.

c) Mhhóu yisi wóh, "dāp" maahnjó ga chè, ngóh nám néih bāmbá móuh māt yéh a.

I'm sorry, the brake was slow, I think your bumper is alright?

Speaker D

1. a) Deuimhjyuh a, maaih cho jó bún bóu faàn, tèng yaht máaih faàn ngāam keuih lā.

I'm sorry I bought the wrong book, shall buy the right one back tomorrow.

b) A deuimhjyuh a, yāt sìhgaan mhgei dāk jó máaih gihn laíh làih, "er", tèngyaht jīkhāak heui maaih.

Oh I'm sorry, I just forgot to buy the present, maybe tomorrow I get it for you.

2. a) A deuimhjyuh a, gàmmaáhn mhgeidāk dá dihnwá faàn làih wah mh faàn làih sihkfaalm.

Oh I'm sorry, I forgot to ring back to say I'm not coming back for dinner.

b) Waih, deuimhjyuh a, neíh mh fongdākga jyuh wóh, yáuh hóudò yéh yiu jouh a, nī lèu hn, chìhdī ji fong lā.

I'm sorry, you can't take your leave because there are many things to do, I'll let you off some other time.

3. a) Deuimhjyuh a, ngóh seúngwah dá jó keuih ge, yauh mhhaih géi gau sìhgaan, yìhgā ngóh beíjó dī choúgóu neíh tái jó sìn, waahkjé haí go chóu góu gó douh góí ngāam sìnji dá lā.

I'm sorry, I was thinking of having it typed, but there is not enough time. I'm letting you see the manuscript first, maybe after you make corrections there then I'll have it typed.

b) Deuimhjyuh a, ngóh gónmhchit jouh fahn report a, ngóh. Ngóh chìh léuhng yaht jauh gáaudihm ge lā, dou sìh béi néih a.

I'm sorry I couldn't finish the report on time, two more days and I'll be able to complete it. Give me two days for submission.

c) Deuimhjyuh a, chàhmyaht mhgeidāk jó fahn appointment làih, ngāam ngāam jouh hòi yéh, mhgeidāk fahn appointment, hómhhóyíh gàmyaht hahjau a?

I'm sorry I forgot about the appointment I was just busy doing something and completely forgot about it, can I see you this afternoon?

4. a) Deuimhjyuh a, béi lóuhsai jūkjyuh jó, sóyíh sihnji chìhjó làih lō. Dáng jó hóu noih a?

I'm sorry, I was held up by my boss so I'm late. Been waiting long?

b) Jànhaih, yihngjàn dęuimhjyuh a, kàhmyaht mhgeidāk jó làiha, jihkchìhng mhgeidāk jó, mhgeidāk jó gihn sih.

I'm so very sorry that I forgot to come yesterday. I simply forgot about it yesterday, just clean forgotten.

c) Deuimhjyuh a, meih yáuh dāk wàahn ji a, chìh géi yaht sìh lā.

I'm sorry I'm not ready to pay you back, maybe a few days later.

5. a) Mhhóu yisi a, chàhmmáahn chìh dāk jaih ge, yànwaih tùhng dī tùhngsih yám jó géi bùi yéh, yauh yiu chè kéuihdeih fàan ngūkkéi, só yíh sihnji chìhjó lō.

I'm sorry it was a bit late last night, my friends had a couple of drinks and I had to take them home so I had come back late.

b) Deuimhjyuh a, gó yaht haih tùhng go néuihjái chēut gāai, bātgwo haih gauh tùhngsih làih ge, bātgwo hóu noih móuh gin, gám "er" tùhng kéuih sihkfaahn jì mah.

I'm sorry, I did go out with a girl that day, but she was my old colleague and we hadn't seen each other for a long time, we dined together.

6. a) Mhgòi je mé lohk chè.

Excuse me please, I wan't to get down.

b) "Er" deuimhjyuh a, nī jèung tói haih ngóh dáng jó hóu noih ge, ngōh sèhng jèung tói yiu saai ge.

I'm sorry, I have been waiting for a long time for this table. I need the whole table.

c) Deuimhhyuh a, hāai chàn hah jēk, ngóh nám dī bāmbá dōu móuh māt yéh ge.

Sorry, only a slight bump, I think the bumper is quite alright.

Speaker E

1. a) Tùhngneih máaih chojó bunsyù a.

   Ah, I bought the wrong book.

   b) Ngoh jihkchìhng mòhng gei jó máaih gihn láihmaht béi neíh a.

   I have simply forgotten to buy the present for you.

2. a) Gàm máahn ngóh mhfaànlàih sink faahn lā.

   I'm not coming back for dinner.

   b) A, gàm yaht neíh mh nàhng gau fongga.

   Oh, you cannot have your holiday.

3. a) Deuimhjyuh a, ngóh gàmyaht sé cho jó gihn report béi neíh.

   I'm sorry I wrote the wrong report to you.

   b) Gàm yaht ngóh móuh gahpsìh beí go report beí neí ha.

   I haven't handed the report in time to you today.

   c) Deuimhjyuh a, ngóh mòhnggei jó yeukjó neíh gàmyaht ginmihn tìm.

   I'm sorry I've forgotten to meet you.

4. a) Deuimhjyuh a, ngóh chìhdou jó.

   Sorry I'm late.

   b) Deuimhjyuh, ngóh mòhng gei jó neíh ge yeukwuih.

   I'm sorry I've forgotten about the appointment with you.

   c) Ngóh mhnàhnggau gahp sìh gin néih mihn.

   I couldn't meet you in time.

5. a) Deuimhjyuh a, lóuhpòh, ngóh gàmmáalm wuíh chìhdī faànlàih.

   I'm sorry wife, I will be late tonight.

   b) Gàmmáahn ngóh yeukjó go néuih pàhngyáuh heui gāai a.

   I've a date with my girlfriend tonight.

6. a) Deuimhjyuh a, jihn chàn néih jek geuk a.

I'm sorry I stepped on you.

b) Deuimhjyuh a, nī jèung tói yíhgìng dehngjó a.

Sorry, this table is reserved.

c) Deuimhjyuh a, johng dou neih go bāmbá.

Sorry, hit you at the bumper.

Speaker F

1. a) Ai yàh ngóh maáih chojó bún syù beí neíh tìm.

Oh dear, I bought the wrong book for you!

b) Ai yàh, ngóh mhgeidāk maáih gihn laíhmaht bēi néih a, lā, ngóh tèngyaht heui gāai ge sihhauh ngóh jauh máaih màaih fàan laìh hāh, tèngyaht saht yáuh ge lā.

Oh dear, I forgot to buy the present for you. When I leave home tomorrow I'll buy you the present. I'll have it tomorrow.

2. a) Aiyàh, a sàam, ngóh mhgeidāk dá dihnwá faànlaìh, wah beí neíh tèng ngóh mhfaànlaìh sihkfaahn tìm. Sihng fàan dī faahn, neíh hóyíh báai hái syutgwaih a, làuh fàan tèng yaht.

Oh dear Ah Sam, I forgot to ring back to tell you that I'm not coming back for dinner. Save whatever rice that's left in the fridge for tomorrow.

b) Deuimhjyuh a, A Sāam , tèngyaht nē, neíh haih mh hóyíh fongga ge, yànwaih nē, ngóhdeih tèngyaht haih nám jyu chéng haak ge.

I'm sorry Ah Sam, you can't take a day off tomorrow because I've invited some guests to my house.

3. a) Wòhng Gìng leíh, deuimhjyuh a, yànwaih sìhgaan góndāk hóu ganyiu lā, soyíh ngóh yìhgā ji yuhnsìhng chóu goí jēk, hèimohng neíh nàhnggau beí síu sìhgaan ngóh, ngoh giu go typist laìh dou dá hóu keúih lā.

Mr. Wong, I'm sorry, because time was so pressing that I only managed to finish the draft. Hope you can give me some more time so the typist can type it out.

b) Deuimhjyuh, Wohng Gingleih, ngoh gon mhchit sehei bougou, ngoh heimohng nahnggau ngaan di sihhauh bei dou neih.

I'm sorry Mr. Wong, I can't finish the report on time. I hope I can have it ready soon.

c) Deuimhjyuh a, Wohng Gingleih, ngoh mohnggei jo yeuk jo neih hai gau dim jung hoiwui tim.

I'm sorry Mr. Wong, I forgot about the meeting at 9.

4. a) Mhhou yisi a, a-Wong, ngoh chih dou jo tim.

I'm sorry, Ah Wong, for being late.

b) Aiyah, a-Wong, mhhou yisi a, ngoh gamyaht mh gei dak laih tim a.

Oh dear, Ah Wong, please excuse me for not turning up yesterday.

c) A-Wong, janhaih, deuimhjyuh la, ngoh jaang neih go bat chin, ngoh tengyaht mh ho yih waahn bei neih a, waahkje hahgo laih baai yat a, dak mh dak a?

I'm really sorry, Ah Wong, the money I owe you I cannot return tomorrow. Give me until next Monday, O.K.?

5. a) Aiyah, louh poh, ngoh chihjo faan laih a, che sak a.

Oh dear, my wife, I'm home late, it's the traffic jam.

b) Neih a ngoh gam yaht ngaanjau haih tuhng yatgo neuih jai heui sihk faahn a.

Oh yes, I did lunch with a girl this afternoon.

6. a) Deui mhjyuh.

Excuse me.

b) Deui mhjuh a, ni jeung toi yauh yahn ga.

I'm sorry, this table is booked.

c) Ai yah, mhhou yisi a, johng chan neih tim, ga che. Yauh mouh johng waaih dou a?

Oh Oh, I'm sorry the car's bumped yours. Is there any damage?

Speaker G

1. a) Maáih chojó dī màhngeui béi néih.

   Bought the wrong stationery item for you.

   b) Mh hóu yisi, mhgeidāk maáih fahn láihmaht béi néih.

   Sorry, forgot to buy you the present.

2. a) Haiha, ngóh móuh faàn làih sihkfaahn a.

   Oh yes, I didn't come back for dinner.

   b) Mhdak, mhjéun fongga.

   No, you can't have your holiday.

3. a) Mh hóu yisi, mhgau sìhgaan jouh.

   I'm sorry, don't have enough time to do it.

   b) Deuimhjyuh, móuh gàau dou fahn bougou.

   Sorry, didn't hand in the report.

   c) Jànhaih mh hóu yisi, mhgeidāk jó néih go yeuk wuih.

   I'm really sorry, forgot all about the appointment

4. a) Deuimhjyuh, chìhdou jó.

   Sorry for being late.

   b) Jànhaih mhhóu yisi, móuh lèih dou.

   So sorry for not having turned up.

   c) Deuimhjyuh a, móuh chín waàhn béi néih.

   Sorry, don't have money to pay you back.

5. a) Chìhjó Faànlèih tìm.

   I'm late for home.

   b) Haih a, ngóh gàmmáahn tùhng jó lihng ngoi yātgo néuihjái chēutgāāi.

   Oh yes, I did go out with another girl tonight.

6. a) Mhgòi je je.

Excuse me.

b) Mhhóu yisi, jèung tói yih gìng yáuh yàhn chóh jó.

Sorry, the table has been taken.

c) Mhhóu yisi, johng dou go bāmbá, móuh māt yéh, jáu lā.

I'm sorry, it's only the bumper, let's go.

Speaker H

1. a) A Wing jái a, ngóh maáih cho jó fahn jaahpjih bóu a, daih yaht maáihgwo fahn ngāam ge béi néih a.

Dear Wing, I bought the wrong book for you, I'll buy another one that is right for you another time.

b) A 'meimei' a, gàmyaht ngóh taai mòhng a, gwo géi yaht joi maáih gwo fahn béi néih a.

Dear Mei Mei, I've been very busy today, forgot to buy the doll for you, I'll buy you one after a few days.

2. a) A Chói Jē, mhhóu yisi, ngóh màhfàahn jó néih, ngóh gàmmáahn mh fàanlàih sihkfaahn ge, ngóh yauh mhgeidāk wah béi néih tèng, ngóh daihyihohi wah béi néih tèng lā.

Oh Ah Choi, please excuse me for troubling you, I'm not coming back for dinner but I forgot to tell you, I'll remember to tell you the next time.

b) A Choí Jē a, néih yauh yiu gou ga a, mh dāk wóh, dím hóyíh gou gam dò ga a, néih gou dāk taai dò ga lā. Mh hóyíh fongga lā, nichi.

Oh Ah Choi, you want to take leave again! You can't, you can't take so many leave, too many leave already, this time not possible.

3. a) Léih Sìnsàang a, yànwaih sìhgaan mhgau a, gó go bou gou ngóh jauh gam chàau jó, móuh dá dāk hóuhóu déi béi néih taí, daih yih chi yáuh sìhgaan ngóh yātdihng jouh dou dá hóujo ji béi néih ga lā.

Oh Mr. Lee, because there was not enough time I only wrote the report by hand instead of having it typed for your perusal. I'll make sure to have future reports typed when there's more time.

3. b) A Léih Sìnsàang, jànhaih deuìmhjyuh a, gó go bou gou ngóh dōu meih jouh hóu, ngóh yíhgìng hòi yeh gùng jouh lā, bātgwo ngóh yauh séung jouh hóu dī, gám ngóh nám jyuh gwo yāt léuhng yaht ngóh jauh wúih jouh hóu ge lā.

Oh Mr. Lee, I'm so sorry, the report isn't finished although I put in a lot of right work. I really want to do it well, so I think I need a couple of days to have it completed.

c) A Léih Sìnsàang a, jànhaih mhhóu yisi, ngóh yeuk jó neíh gin mihn ge, daahnhaih mh jì dímgáai, ngóh jouh dou wàhn saai, mhgeidāk jó a, jànhaih mhhóu yisi a, neíh dáng gam noih.

Oh Mr. Lee, I'm so sorry. For our date, I somehow have forgotten, having worked so hard I really couldn't remember, really sorry for making you wait.

4. a) A Léih Jáai a, jànhaih mhhóu yisi a, gàmyaht dī gaàutùng hóu bīk, gón lòih gón heui dōu gón mhdou, sóyíh leìh chìhjó yiu neíh dáng gam noih.

Oh Lee, I'm so sorry, today's traffic is terribly congested, no matter how hard I tried I just couldn't make it on time, sorry to be late and to have kept you waiting.

b) Jeùng Jaí a, waih mhhóu yisi a, bunlòih yeukjó neíh gammáahn tùhng néih sihkfaahn ge, daahnhaih yáuh dī yiu sih, jauh mh leìh dāk, mhhóu yisi bo ngóh daih yih chi joi yeuk gwo neíha.

Oh Cheung, I'm sorry about the date for dinner tonight, there's something urgent cropped up so I won't be able to come. I'm sorry, I'll call you up another time.

c) A Wòhng Sìnsàang a, jànhaih mhhóu yisi wóh, neíh gó pāt sou, ngóh deih móuh faat jí a, lèi pàaih hóu gán a, néih sùng yuhng háh a, béi ngóh dò géi yaht a, haih mh dihm a nī chi.

c) Oh Mr. Wong, I'm really sorry, about the debt I owe you, I can't think of any resources, money is tight nowadays, can you be generous and allow me a few more days? This time I'm really in trouble.

5. a) Lóuh pòh a, ngóh gàmmáahn chìh jó faàhleìh a, yànwaih gūngsī taai dò yéh jouh, bunloìh yìnggòi jóu dī faànleìh ge, dàih yih chi ngóh yíh sìh.

Oh wife, I'm late today because there were too many things to do at the office. I really should have come have earlier. Next time I'll be home on time.

b) Néih dōu jìjou lā, néih dōu jìdou yáuh māt hóu góng jēk, gam yáuh sìh ngóh chēut hái gāai jī máh, móuh māt yéh a, ngóhdeih.

You knew already, since you knew about it there's not much that I can say. It's just an occasional date for us, nothing else.

6. a) Mhgòi je je, mhgòi néih je gón j yuh lohkchè, mhgòi.

Please excuse me, please excuse me, I need to get off right now, thank you.

b) Gó wái yáuh yàhn gè wóh, mhhóu yisi a, ngóhdeih dáng jó hóunoih ga, ngóh pàhng yáuh jauhleìh lèih ge lā.

That seat is already taken, I'm sorry, we've been waiting long, my friends are coming.

c) Yáuh móuh gáau cho a! Tìhng chè tìhng dāk gám yéung ge, dáng ngóh saat dōu saat mh jyuh, go bāmbá, ngóh bāmbá dōu fā jó dī a! Néih gam chē, bīn go dōu tìhng mh dou lā. Néih jà jó chè géinoí a.

What do you think you're doing, to brake your car like that? I just couldn't brake so fast, as for the bumper, my bumper is scratched too. The way you braked, nobody could stop in time. How long have you been driving?

1. a) Deuimhjyuh lā, nàh, gàmyaht tùhng néih máaih cho jó ni yèuhng yéh, néih yìhgā yáuh móuh dāk yuhng a yùhgwó yáuh dāk yuhng jauh daih yaht joi máaihgwo béi néih.

This thing, do you have something to work on? If you have, I'll buy one back some other time?

b) Deuimhjuh lā, ngóh yìnggòi gàmyaht lèih, ngóh jauh sung yeuhng yéh béi néih ge, bāt gwo lē gàmyaht jauh hóu mòhng, yāt yaht jauh mh gei dāk jó, gám ngóh tèngyaht joi máaih gwo fàan lèih sung go béi néih hái.

I'm sorry, I should have bought you a present, but I have been so busy today I just couldn't remember. I shall try to get you a present tomorrow.

2. a) Aiyàh, jànhaih deuimhjyuh lā, ngóh gàm jiu mhgeidāk jó wah béi néih tèng ngóh gàmmáahn mh fàan lèih sihkfaahn, dáng néih jyú dò jó tìm

Oh dear I'm really sorry you have cooked so much rice, I forgot to tell you this morning that I'm not coming back for dinner tonight.

b) Aiyàh, bún lòih jauh móuh só waih ge, bātgwo ngóh ngāam ngāam lèih jauh nìlèuhn jauh yáuh dī sih, jauh séung néih làuh fàan haidouh jauh jouhhái yéh, gám néih hómhhóyíh gói daihyaht sìnji gou a.

Oh dear, it shouldn't be a problem, but I'm really busy these days, you can help by staying behind. Can you take leave on another day?

3. a) Néih giu ngóh sé gó fahn bougou lē ngóh jauh jeuhn faai gón lā, bātgwo lē jauh sihgaan jauh jànhaih mhhaih géi gau, gám ngóh yìhgā lē jauh meihchàhng jíngdākhóu, jíhaih jíngjó go chóugóu, néih tái hái dímyéung.

The report you have asked me to write up will be finished soon. But as the time is inadequate, it's still not yet organized. Only the manuscript is done, if you would care to look at it.

c) Ai, jànhaih deuimhjyuh la, néih je ngóh gó dī chín lē, ngóh yìhgā sahthaih móuh baahnfaat hóyíh jéun sih wàahn fàan béi néih, "er", waahkjé lē, yùhgwó néih mhhaih gam bīkchit ge lē, hó fáu fùn haahn dò dī sihhauh béi ngóh lē.

I'm terribly sorry, there is just no way that I can return the money I owe you. If you're not urgently in need of the sum, can I pay you back later?

5. a) Ai, deuimhjyuh a, móuh dá dihnwá faànlaih wah béi néih tèng yehdī fàan. Gàmmáahn yáuh pàhng yauh, yauh yìngchàuh, gám gónghei seuhng làih lē fātyihngāan dá dihnwá haih mhhaih géi fongbihnge.

Oh sorry, didn't ring back to tell you I would be late. Tonight I had to entertain some friends, and it was inconvenient to call back in the middle of the conversation.

b) Ai, ngóh jànhaih deui néih mh jyuh là, bātgwo nī dī dou haih fuhng chèuhng jok hing jēk, yíhhauh ngóh dou mhwuíh ge lā.

Oh I am really sorry about it. But it was just once in a blue moon. I promise never to do it again.

6. a) Deuimhjyuh, chéng néih je je, ngóh yiu lohk chè.

Excuse me please, I want to get off.

b) Deuimhjyuh sinsàang, nī jèung toi yihging yáuh yàhn ge lā.

I'm sorry mister, this table is already taken.

c) A deuimhjyuh a, johng dou néih ga chè, bātgwo johng dāk hóu siú jēk, ... ngóh puìh-fàan béi néih waahkjé tùhng néih jíng fàan hóu a.

Oh, sorry to hit your car, but it's only very slight. I'll pay for the damages or have it repaired for you.

c) Ai, jànhaih deuimhjyuh la, néih je ngóh gó dī chín lē, ngóh yihgā sahthaih móuh baahnfaat hóyih jéun sih wàahn fàan béi néih, "er", waahkjé lē, yùhgwó néih mhhaih gam bīkchit ge lē, hó fáu fùn haahn dò dī sìhhauh béi ngóh lē.

I'm terribly sorry, there is just no way that I can return the money I owe you. If you're not urgently in need of the sum, can I pay you back later?

5. a) Ai, deuimhjyuh a, móuh dá dihnwá faànlaìh wah béi néih tèng yehdī fàan. Gammáahn yáuh pùhng yauh, yauh yìngchàuh, gám gónghei seuhng làih lē fātyihngaan dá dihnwá haih mhhaih géi fongbihnge.

Oh sorry, didn't ring back to tell you I would be late. Tonight I had to entertain some friends, and it was inconvenient to call back in the middle of the conversation.

b) Ai, ngóh jànhaih deui néih mh jyuh lā, bātgwo nī dī dou haih fuhng cheuhng jok hing jēk, yihhauh ngóh dou mhwúih ge lā.

Oh I am really sorry about it. But it was just once in a blue moon. I promise never to do it again.

6. a) Deuimhjyuh, chéng néih je je, ngóh yiu lohk chè.

Excuse me please, I want to get off.

b) Deuimhjyuh sìnsàang, nī jèung toi yihging yáuh yàhn ge lā.

I'm sorry mister, this table is already taken.

c) A deuimhjyuh a, johng dou néih ga chè, bātgwo johng dāk hóu siú jēk, ... ngóh puìh-fàan béi néih waahkjé tùhng néih jíng fàan hóu a.

Oh, sorry to hit your car, but it's only very slight. I'll pay for the damages or have it repaired for you.

Speaker J

1. a) Gàmyaht yànwaih taaigwo chùngmòhng sóyíh jauh máah cho jó nī go màhngeuih néih, ngóh tèngyaht fong gùng jìhauh lē jauh wúih maáihgwo lihng yāt gihn lā.

Because I was in such a rush today, I bought the wrong stationery item for you. I'll get you another one when I leave the office tomorrow.

b) Ngóh gàmyaht yànwaih yáuh gūng sih lē taaigwodò lā, jouh dou fonggùng jauh hoú yeh, sóyíh lē jouh fonggùng gó sìh jauh chùng chùng mòhng mòhng faàn ngūkkéi, jauh mhgeidāk joi heui máaih gó gihn láihmaht, ngóh tèngyaht jīkhāak joi máaih fàan tìuh béi néih a!

Today I have had too much work at the office, and it was late when I finished my work. I was just busy getting home then that I forgot about the present. I shall buy you one tomorrow.

2. a) A, gàmyaht fonggùng tùhngmàaih dī pàhngyaúh jauh heuijó sihkfaahn, mhgeidāk dá dihnwá faàn laìh wah mhsái jyú máaih ngóh dí faahn tìm, mhhoú yisi lā, jànhaih.

Oh, today I went with my friends to have dinner after office hours and forgot about calling back to say that you don't have to cook rice for me. I'm really sorry.

b) Néih seúng nīgo sīng kèih luhk fongga a, daahnhaih ngóh dī pàhngyáuh jauh yeuk hóusaai nīgo láih baai luhk làih ngóh ngukkéi, gám sóyíh ngóh yātdihng sèuiyiu yàhn làuh hái douhga, bāt yùh néih daih yih chi yáuh gèiwuih joi yeuk di pàhngyáuh ló gwo daih yih dī ga kèih lā.

You want to take this Saturday off? But I have made arrangements with my friends to come over to my house on Saturday, so I need someone at the house. Maybe you should take your leave with your friends some other time.

3. a) Nī tahn yéh lē jauh ngāam ngāam jíng hóu jó, daahn haih nī typing pool jauh hóu mòhng gónmhohit dá béi néih, ngóh yìhgā jauh gám sáu sé ge jauh gaàu beí néih tái háh lā.

This thing is now finished. But the typing pool is busy right now and can't have it typed out for you. So I have to submit the handwritten form for you to look at.

b) Yaǹ waih jeuigahn sáutàuh seuhng yáuh hóudò gùngjok yiu jouh, sóyíh nīgo report lē ngóh jauh móuh baahnfaat nīgo sìhhauh gaaù béi néih, ngóh jeuhn faai gón faai gón héi béi neíh lā, daih yih chi.

Because I have so many things on my hands so I can't finish this report for you right now. I'll try to have it finished quickly for you next time we meet.

c) Tsui sìnsàang a, yàn waìh lē ngóh jingwah tùhng dī tùhngsih kìng gán lihng yāt gāan gūngsih sóyíh lìhn yìngsìhng làih gin néih ngóh dōu m̀h geidāk jó, leuih néih dáng jó gam noih, jànhaih mhhóu yisi lā.

Oh Mr. Tsui, because I was engaged in an urgent discussion with my colleague just now I forgot about the appointment to see you. I am really sorry for having kept you waiting for so long.

4. a) Waih, jànhaih deuimhjyuh lā, chìh làihjó, ngóh chéng yám chàh a, bóu faàn sou.

Eh I'm really sorry for being late to compensate, let me pay for the bill.

b) Hey , jànhaih móuh baahnfaat lā, chàhmyaht ngāamngāam hgūkkéi yaúh dī yéh gaáv gán, sóyíh móuh baahnfaat làih dou gin mihn.yihngjan mhhou yisi.

Eh I'm really sorry for being late to compensate, let me pay for the bill.

c) Ngoh jàang néih chín nē búnlòih yīnggòi yìhgā wàahn béi néih ga, daahnhaih yànwaih yìhgā saútàuh lē dōu juhnghaih mhhaih géi fòngbihn, sóyíh lē hèimohng néih hó yíh jeùng jauh háh, chìh síusíu sìnji waàhn béi néih.

I should return the money I owe you now, but I am still short of cash, so I hope you can give me some allowance and give me more time.

5. a) Mā mìh a, jànhaih mhhóu yisi lā, yùhn bún nē, ngóh hóyíh chāt dím leng jūng faàn laìh ga, dím ji bāan tùhngsih yám yùhn jáu juhng wah yiu heui sihk màaih faahn, só yíh gaáu dou gam yeh.

Mamie, I am really sorry, I could have come back at seven, but my colleagues insisted to go out for dinner after a few drinks, that's why it took me so long.

b) Māmìha, ngóh nám néih dōu jìdouh ngóh lē chàhmyaht tùhngmàaih go néuih pàhngyáuh chēut heui sihk faahn, bātgwo ngóh bóu jing daih yih chi mh wúih yáuh gam ge yeh faatsāng ga lā.

Mamie, (I think) you know that I went out with a girlfriend to dinner last night. But I can promise you this will never happen again.

6. a) Ai, mhgòi, mhgoì, deuimhjyuh háh, je je, dáng ngóh lohkchè, mhgoì.

Oh excuse me, excuse me, sorry please, let me get off, thank you.

b) A, nijeùng tói ngóh yíhgìng dáng jó hóu noih ge, jauh ... mhhou yisi a, néih wah jēk wán gwo daih yih jèung tói hou mh hóu a?

I have been waiting for this table for a long time, I am sorry, but can you wait for another one?

c) Jànhaih mhhóu yisi, ngóh yíhgìng dāp ga chè ga lā, dím jí dōu dāp mh dou, hāai dou néih ga chè (bāmbá). Yaúh móuh síha, néih ga chè, tái háh sái mhsái yiu jíng a, yùhgwó haih, dáng ngóh bóu faàn dī chín béi a!

I'm really sorry. I already tried to brake the car, but it just didn't work, and your bumper's got bit. Is your car alright? See whether you need to make repairs, if so, I'll pay you back.

Speaker A

1a. 本簿呢？買咗返嚟。你話唔啱呀，咁所以嚟日再買嗰隻俾你。

b. 嗰件禮物我買咗啦，留咗係公司，嚟日帶返嚟俾你。

2a. 呀！唔好意思，今日唔記得通知你我唔返嚟食飯添。

b. 嚟日你想攞假啊，唔得喎。我地請客喎，所以你唔可以攞假啦。

3a. 你趕住要嗰個 report，我係已经寫好啦，但呢個係手寫嘅，想俾你睇咗先，你有乜 comment 話俾我聽，到時我可以執番正佢。

b. 嗰個 report 哩？宜家趕緊咪啦。暫時未得啫。

c. 因為我趕住時間去開會，咁所以就冇法子 meet 到那個 appointment，唔知你搵我有冇事哩？

4a. 對唔住喎，我因為好塞車，所以遲咗嚟。

b. 琴日我唔喺要 attend 一個 emergency，所以我趕唔到嚟啦。

c. 重未出糧喎，我暫時未攞到錢，過多幾日啦！過多幾日我出到糧還俾你啦！

5a. 我哋啱啱開會，同老細開會開到宜家咋。又塞車呀，所以哋遲先返到嚟。

b. 你哪日見到呢係公司呢P. R. 嚟咪，我同埋佢去site 啟發開。

6a. Hey 唔該借歪，唔該借歪。

b. 喂，大佬，呢張枱我等緊嚟喎，你攞過第2張啦！

c. 阿，揸親小小啫，唔駛呢，對唔住喎。

Speaker B

1a. 對唔住呀！我呢次買錯咗俾你，下次買番唔俾你啦！

b. 呀，對唔住呀！我唔記得買件禮物俾你添，我聽日買番俾你啦！

2a. 對唔住呀！我唔記得同你講，我今晚唔返嚟食飯添。

b. 你要攞假？但係聽日好多嘢做喎，或者等日攞啦好嗎？

3a. 對唔住，嗰份 report 我趕唔切打俾你，所以用手寫，好草呀！

b. 對唔住，我唔記得做份 report。

c. 對唔住，我唔記得咗我今朝係約咗嚟見你呀！

4a. 喂，對唔住呀，我啱啱出門口接到個電話，所以嚟遲咗。

b. 對唔住呀，我哥日啱啱有啲事唔得閒嚟。

c. 對唔住，我啱啱唔方便，所以俾唔到啲錢你。

5a. 今晚打完麻雀贏咗錢，俾啲朋友拉咗去諗宵夜，所以遲咗返嚟。

b. 我無，我啱啱撞到個舊同學，佢話就嚟要去等二到地方，所以我就陪佢食餐飯，同埋睇套戲。

6a. 喂，唔該你借借，我要落車啊！

b. 哦，先生，對唔住啊，呢張枱係我等咗好
有好多人未嚟呀，呢張枱我要畀嘅，唔該
二張啦！

c. 對唔住，阿sir，係我一時唔小心，撞親你
者等吓睇吓有冇…我賠返俾你啊！

Speaker C

1a. 對唔住呀，買錯咗呀，同你再買過個呀。

b. 今日忙過頭，唔記得買返嚟俾你，第日再買過個俾你呀。

2a. 唔好意思呀，我約咗人食飯，今晚趕唔切返嚟食。

b. 唔好意思呀，呢辰比較忙啲，就唔能夠俾你攞飯住，第日先俾你攞啦。

暫時俾個草稿你

3a. 唔好意思，因為typing嘅到忙，趕唔切打俾你，如果你認為唔滿意，我再同你打過個。

b. 唔好意思呀，嘅個report已經做咗一部份嚟嘞，但係有啲資料未齊，遲啲俾你啦！如果你係唔介意嘅話，我哋呢一兩日俾到你

c. 唔好意思呀，我搞錯咗日子，我以為聽日先至係有個interview添！

4a. 喂，真係唔好意思呀，咁遲先至嚟，啱啱塞車呀，你知香港地塞車有幾塞，唉，唔好意思。

b. 今日真係唔係幾好彩，因為想搵你嘅時候，啱啱又俾老細捉住咗，做做吓過咗鐘，唔記得咗添，上去搵你又搵唔到，唔好意思呀！

c. 你知啦，咱家係月中間咋，暫時係未有錢還返俾你住，我諗要出糧個陣時至還得返俾你，如果你唔介意呢話。

5a. 唔好意思，咁遲先返嚟食飯，啱啱係路上撞到個朋友，傾咗兩句，所以係過咗時間啦。

b. 我咁遲返嚟，係撞咗阿×小姐，好耐冇見，係蕩個學嚟呢，佢有啲嘢問，順便帶咁佢去啦，所以係遲咗返嚟。

6a 呀，唔該，讓－讓落車呀。

b 對唔住呀，呢架抬已經有咗人啦。

c. 唔好意思喎，有慢咗咪車，我諗你個系把冇乜嘢呀。

Speaker D

1a. 對唔住呀，買鋪本部嗦，嚟日買返唔俾啦。

b. 呀，對唔住呀，一時間唔記得咗買嗰件禮添，er，嚟日即刻去買。

2a. 呀，對唔住呀，今晚唔記得打電話返嚟話唔返嚟食飯。

b. 喂，對唔住呀，你唔放得假住喎，呢輛有好多嘢要你做呀，遲的至放啦。

3a. 對唔住呀，我想話打咗俾佢嘅，又唔係幾夠時間，喺家我傳咗嘅草稿你睇咗先，或者係個草稿嗰到改唔先至打啦！

b. 對唔住呀，我趕唔切做份 report 呀，我遲兩日就攪掂嘥啦，到時我傳你啦！

c. 對唔住呀，哥日唔記得咗份 appointment 添，唔啱做開嘢，唔記得份 appointment，可唔可以今日下晝呀？

4a 對唔住呀，傳老細捉住咗，所以咪遲咗嚟囉。等咗好耐呀。

b. 真係認真對唔住呀，嗰日唔記得咗嚟，直情唔記得咗，唔記得咗件事。

-A35-

c. 對唔住呀，未有得還住呀，遲幾日先啦！

5a. 唔好意思呀，尋晚遲得滯嘅，因為同啲同事飲咗幾杯嘢，又要車佢地返屋企，所以咪遲咗囉。

b. 對唔住呀，嗰日係同個女仔出街，不過係蕪同事嚟嘅，不過好耐無見，咁ㄟ同佢食飯之嗎。

6a 唔該借歪洁車。

b. ㄟ，對唔住呀，呢張枱係我等咗好耐嘅，我成張枱要㗎喺。

c. 對唔住呀，搭親吓啫，我嗰的象把都冇乜嘢嘅。

Speaker E

1a. 同你買餡咗本書呀。

b. 我直情忘記咗買件禮物俾你呀。

2a. 今晚我哋返嚟食飯啦。

b. 呀，今日你哋能夠放假。

3a. 對唔住呀，我今日冚銷咗件 report 俾你。

b. 今日我無乜時俾個 report 俾你呀。

c. 對唔住呀，我忘記咗 約咗你今日見面添。

4a 對唔住呀，我遲到咗。

b. 對唔住呀，我忘記咗你嘅約會。

c. 我哋能夠又時見你面。

5a 對唔住呀，老婆，我今晚會遲啲返嚟。

b. 今晚我約咗個女朋友去街呀。

6a 對唔住呀，踩親你隻腳呀。

b 對唔住呀，兜菜拍已經訂咗呀。

c. 對唔住呀，撞到你個後生。

Speaker F

1a. 哎唷，我買錯咗本書俾你添。

b. 哎唷，　　我唔記得買件禮物俾你呀。嗱，我嚟日去街嘅時候我就買埋返嚟吓，嚟日實有嚟嘞。

2a. 哎唷，阿3，我唔記得打電話返嚟話俾你聽我唔返嚟食飯添，剩返啲飯你可以擺係雪櫃，留番嚟日。

b. 對唔住呀，　阿3，嚟日呢你係唔可以放假嘅，因為呢，我地嚟日係請客嘅。

3a. 王經理，對唔住呀，因為時間趕得好緊要咧，所以我宜嚟至完成草稿啫，希望你能夠俾多少時間我，我叫個 typist 嚟到打好佢啦。

b. 對唔住，王經理，我趕唔切喺起個報告，我希望能夠嘅啲時候俾到你。

c. 對唔住呀，王經理，我忘記咗約咗你係9點鐘開會添。

4a. 唔好意思呀 阿王，我遲到咗添。

b. 哎唷，阿王，唔好意思呀，我嚟日唔記得嚟添呀。

c. 阿王，真係對唔住喎，我爭你啲錢我嚟日唔可以還俾你呀，或者下個禮拜一呀，得唔得呀？

5a. 哎唷，老婆，我遲咗返嚟呀，車塞呀。

b. 係呀，我今日嗰晝係同一個女仔去食飯呀。

6a. 對唔住。

b. 對唔住呀，呢張枱有人㗎。

c. 哎唷，唔好意思呀，撞親你條架車，有冇撞壞到呀？

Speech 6

1a. 買錯咗啲文具俾你。

b. 唔好意思，唔記得買份禮物俾你。

2a. 係呀，我冇返嚟食飯呀。

b. 唔得，唔准放假！

3a. 唔好意思，唔夠時間做。

b. 對唔住，冇交到份報告。

c. 真係唔好意思，唔記得咗你個約會。

4a. 對唔住，遲到咗。

b. 真係唔好意思，冇嚟到。

c. 對唔住呀，冇錢還俾你。

5a. 遲咗返嚟添。

b. 係呀，我今晚同咗另外個女仔出街。

6a. 唔該，借借。

b. 唔好意思，張枱已經有人坐咗。

c. 唔好意思，撞到個衰把，有乜嘢，走啦

Speaker H

1a. 呀，頴仔呀，我買錯咗你習字簿呀，第日買過你喺俾你呀。

b. 呀，mei mei呀，今日我太忙呀，有買到你個公仔，我過幾日再買過你俾你呀。

2a. 呀，彩姐，唔好意思，我麻煩咗你，我今晚唔返嚟食飯嘅，我又唔記得話俾你聽，我第次話俾你聽啦。

b. 呀，彩姐呀，你又要告假呀，唔得喎，點可以告咁多假呀。你告得太多假啦。唔可以放假啦，呢次。

3a. 李先生呀，因為時間唔夠呀，嗰個報告我就咁抄咗，冇打得好好地俾你睇，第二次有時間我一定做到打好咗至俾你嚟嘞。

b. 呀，李先生，真係對唔住呀，嗰個報告我都未做好，我已經開夜工做嘞，不過我又想做嘅，咁我諗住過一兩日我就會做好嚟嘞。

c. 呀，李先生呀，真係唔好意思，我約咗你見面嘅，但係唔知點解，我做到暈晒，唔記得咗呀，真係唔好意思呀，你等咁耐。

4a. 呀，李仔呀，真係唔好意思呀，今日嘅交通好通，趕去趕去都趕唔到，所以嚟遲咗要你等咁耐。

b. 張仔呀，喂，唔好意思呀，本来約咗你今晚(同你)食飯㗎，但係有啲要事就唔嚟得，唔好意思㗎，我第二次再約過你呀。

c. 阿王先生呀，真係唔好意思喎，你個年數，我哋冇法子呀，呢啲好緊呀，你鬆宕吓呀，俾我多幾日呀，係唔掂呀，呢次。

5a. 老婆呀，我今晚遲咗返嚟呀，因為公司太多嘢做，本来應該早啲返嚟㗎，第二次(我)係㗎呀。

b. 你都知道啦，你都知道有乜好講啫，咁有時我出吓街之嘛，冇乜嘢呀，我哋。

6a. 唔該借借，唔該你借，趕住落車，唔該！

b. 個位有人㗎喎，唔好意思呀，我哋等咗好耐嚟，我朋友就嚟喺㗎。

c. 有冇搞錯呀！停車停得咁猱㗎，等我到都到唔住，個架把我架把鼻花咗啲呀！你叫到車，邊個都停唔到㗎。你趁咗車幾耐呀！

Speaker I

1a. 呢樣嘢，你而家有冇得用呀，如果有得用，就等日再買過俾你。

b. 對唔住啦，我應該今日嚟我就送樣嘢俾你嘅，不過喱，今日就好忙，一日就唔記得咗，咁我聽日買過返嚟送過俾你吓。

2a. 哎唷，真係對唔住啦，我今朝唔記得咗話俾你聽我今晚唔返嚟食飯，等你煮多咗添。

b. 哎唷，本來就冇所謂嘅，不過我啱啱呢輪就有啲事，就想你留返係到做吓嘢，咁你可唔可以改等日先至告呀？

3a. 你叫我嗰個份報告喱我就盡快趕啦，不過呢，就時間就真係唔係幾夠，咁我宜嚟喱，就未曾整得好，只係整咗個草稿，你睇吓點樣。

b. 你叫我做嗰份報告喱，真係對唔住喎，我冇辦法可以做得好，因為時間實在緊逼，係咁短嘅時間裏辦，我係要搜集咁多嘢，係真係做唔到嘅。可唔可以遲幾日，等我搞掂，到時再俾你呀？

c. 真係對唔住喎，我本來喱就嚟低咗話頭先見你嘅，但做開嘢嘅時候呢就做做吓唔記咗，咁根本呢就真程冇咗件事，咁唔知你搵我係有乜嘢特別嘅嘢呢？

4a. 哦，對唔住呀，我遲咗嘢意思。

b. 喂，哎，上次真係對唔住，我本來約定見嘅，我就唔記得咗，咁樣好嘢？

c. 哎，真係對唔住喎，辦法可以準時還返俾你，或者喺如果你唔係咁急切嘅嘢，可否寬限幾日？

5a. 哎，對唔住呀，冇打擾你晚晚朋友，有應酬，係唔係幾方便呢。

b. 哎，我真係對你唔住，以後我都唔會嚟喎。

6a. 對唔住，請你借借，

b. 對唔住先生，呢張枱

c. 呀，對唔住呀，撞到，賠返俾你或者同你整

Speaker J

1a. 今日因為太過忽忙，所以就冒錯咗呢個文具俾你，我嚟日放工之時喱就會買過另一件啦。

b. 我今日因為有公事喱太過多嘞，做到放工就好夜，所以喱就放工嗰時就忽忽忙忙返屋企，就唔記得咗去買嗰件禮物，我嚟日即刻再買返條俾你呀！

2a. 呀，今日放工就同埋啲朋友就去咗食飯，唔記得打電話返嚟話唔該埋我啲飯添，唔好意思嘞，真係。

b. 你想呢個星期六放假呀，但係我啲朋友就約好晒呢個禮拜六嚟我屋企。咁所以我一定需要人留係到呀，不如你第二次有機會再約啲朋友攞過第二啲假期啦。

3a. 呢份嘢喱就唔該整好咗，但係呢 typing pool 就好忙，趕唔切打俾你，我宜家就咁手寫嘅，就交俾你睇吓啦！

b. 因為近日手頭上有好多工作要做，所以呢個 report 喱，我就冇辦法呢個時候交俾你，我盡快趕起俾你啦，第二次。

c. 崔先生呀，因為喱我正話同啲同事傾緊另一件公事，所以迷廔永嚟見你我都唔記得咗咁啲，真係唔好意思嘞。

累你等咗

4a. 喂，真係對唔住哟，遲嚟咗，我請飲茶呀，補返數

b. 啼，真係冇辦法哟，哥日啱啱屋企有啲嘢攪緊，所以冇辦法嚟到見面，認真唔好意思。

c. 我爭你錢呢，本来應該宜家還俾你咪，但係因為宜家手頭哋部重係唔係幾方便，所以哩希望你可以將就吓，過小小先至還俾你。

5a. 媽咪呀，真係唔好意思哟，原本呢我可以大點零鐘返嚟咪，點知班同事飲完酒重話要去食埋飯，所以攪到咁夜。

b. 媽咪呀，我說你都知道，我哩，哥日同埋一個女朋友出去食飯，不過我保証第二次唔會有咁嘅嘢發生咪哟。

6a. 哎，唔該，唔該，對唔住吓，借借，等我落車，唔該。

b. 呀，呢張枱我已經等咗好耐呢，就……唔好意思呀，你或者搵過第二張枱好唔好呀！

c. 真係唔好意思，我已經有架車嚟哟，點知都有唔到，攪到你架車呢系把，自行爭呀你架車，睇吓使唔使得㗎，如果係，等我補返啲錢俾你呀。

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